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Family Type and Parenting Style

of Working Professional Women

presented by

Susan Anne Robinson

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for

M.S. degree in Nursing

Linda Beth Teelje
Major professor

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**FAMILY TYPE AND PARENTING STYLE
OF WORKING PROFESSIONAL WOMEN**

By

Susan Anne Robinson

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

FAMILY TYPE AND PARENTING STYLE OF WORKING PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

By

Susan Anne Robinson

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine type of family system and parenting style of 48 working professional women selected from Tiedje's (1985) longitudinal role conflict study. The majority (85.4%) of women were classified as having a general mid-range type of family system based on levels of cohesion and adaptability, and displayed more positive than negative parenting style behaviors. Type of family system was related to positive parenting styles. Cohesion was more highly correlated with positive parenting style than type of family system (cohesion and adaptability together). Adaptability alone was not significantly correlated with positive parenting style. Type of family system was inversely related to negative parenting style. Implications for assessing families in primary care according to type of family system and parenting style are discussed.

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To my parenting partner, husband Tom, and our personal subjects, Mindy, Peter, and of course, Kobie.

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INTRODUCTION

Relevant Background Information

Strong families are important in a productive society. Nursing has historically focused on families with chronically-ill children. Yet essentially healthy children are also in need of parenting and family support. Family nursing as a specialty and the development of periodicals devoted exclusively to family function, such as Family Nursing, reflect the development of family nursing science. Sociologists have focused on the restructuring and redefinition of families beyond the nuclear family which now comprises only 7% of U.S. households (Otto, 1988). Furthermore, Elkind (1994) claims that the “glorified” traditional family arrangement of peace and harmony is a misnomer and proposes new ways to re-vitalize the family beyond insistence on a particular family structure.

Changing society has wrought additional demands and expectations upon working parents and in so doing, has influenced parent-parent and parent-child relations including emotional attachment, or cohesion. Given this land of abundance and opportunity, parents, particularly working professional women, are faced with the difficult dilemma of balancing work obligations, societal responsibilities in the community, their own individual needs, parental duties, and family life promotion. Family life promotion, or ways in which to bring family members together, involves decisions about time limitations, “required” family shared time, and other activities for family attachment (McCubbin, Thompson, Pirner, & McCubbin, 1987).

Aside from issues of role conflict and role strain in parents, varying degrees and forms of parenting style have evolved which mirror shifting cultural values regarding traits desired in children. These evolving parenting styles have profound consequences for children and society. For example, Alwin (1990) noted the increasing value on independence and autonomy in children along with a declining emphasis on conformity or obedience to traditional institutional authority.

The purpose of this descriptive study is to examine type of family system and parenting styles of working professional women with children, and to explore the relationship between type of family system in terms of cohesion and adaptability and parenting style. The conventional health care delivery system, designed to support only ill children, often overlooks the needs of “healthy” children and families. The Advanced Practice Nurse in the primary health care setting focuses on health rather than illness, and prevention and care, rather than cure. Because of her/his very title of primary care provider, it is essential that the APN be well versed in family functioning and parenting issues and thus, provide sound guidance to strengthen families.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

The two variables in this study to be examined are type of family system and parenting style. The conceptual definitions are:

Type of family system

A family system is a social system that is self-defined by its members, hierarchically organized to include the overall family and subsystems (or smaller units of interaction among members) and promotes the development of individual qualities within the system

(Whitechurch & Constantine, 1993). The family system is experienced uniquely by each individual in the family who constructs her/his own reality. Dynamics within family systems occur at the level of subsystems (units of two or more family members, e.g., mother-child) (Henry, Sager, & Plunkett, 1996). Change and development are inherent in all types of family systems. Type of family system refers to the classification of a multidimensional construct referring to how the family operates across many dimensions including personal growth and development, relationships, organization, and available resources (Smilkstein, 1978). Relationship concepts include cohesiveness, adaptability, interdependence and communication of members.

For purposes of this study, two main concepts, family cohesion and adaptability, will be used to describe type of family system (Olson, 1983). Cohesion refers to the degree of emotional attachment that family members have toward one another (Olson, 1983). The Olson Circumplex Model (1989) proposes the need to balance the cohesion dimension between too much closeness (very connected or enmeshed systems) and too little closeness (disengaged systems).

The other key relationship concept in type of family system is adaptability. Adaptability is the family's ability to change its interaction patterns in response to situational or developmental stress. A desired outcome is a balance of the two extremes of adaptability: being rigid or chaotic. Rigidity is identified as highly controlled leadership, strict discipline, limited negotiation, strictly defined roles and unchanging, strictly enforced rules. A chaotic level of adaptability is one in which leadership is limited and/or erratic; discipline is laissez-faire and ineffective; negotiations are endless; decisions are impulsive;

roles lack clarity with few routines; and rule changes are frequent. Olson (1989) computes type of family system as the sum of cohesion and adaptability divided by two to yield several categories: a) balanced, b) moderately balanced, c) mid-range, and d) extreme types of families.

For purposes of this study, two aspects of type of family system will be examined. Cohesion will be defined as the emotional connection between family members, specifically mothers and their children. Family adaptability will be defined as the ability to handle change, individually and as part of a system. The union of the concepts will be regarded as type of family system, and categorized according to Olson (1989).

Parenting style

Parenting style refers to the way parents react to their children's behaviors and the demands parents make on children (Baumrind, 1978; Schor, 1995). Baumrind (1978) has organized parenting styles into three dimensions: a) authoritarian; b) permissive; and c) authoritative. Authoritarian parents attempt to shape, control and evaluate behaviors and attributes of their children using an absolute set of standards. These parents emphasize obedience, respect for authority, work, tradition and the preservation of order. Verbal give-and-take between parent and child is discouraged. This style demands high maturity on the child's part, and is more detached and "less warm" than other styles. Permissive parenting, in which the parent is tolerant and accepting of a child's impulses, uses as little punishment as possible and makes few demands for mature behavior. Considerable self-regulation is allowed (and even required) by the child. The third style of parenting, authoritative parenting, is composed of the following elements: a) an expectation of

mature child behaviors and clear setting of standards by the parents; b) firm enforcement of rules and standards mutually agreed upon; c) encouragement of children's independence and individuality; d) open communication between parents and children with verbal give-and-take encouraged; and e) recognition of rights/mutual respect for parents and children.

Dibble and Cohen (1974), in developing the Parents' Report, simplified parental style into two categories: a) positive or socially desirable parental behavior; and b) negative or socially undesirable parental behavior. Negative categories include "detachment," "control through guilt," "lax enforcement of discipline," and "control through hostility." Examples of positive categories are "positive involvement," "control with positive discipline," and "child-centeredness." Relating Dibble and Cohen (1974) to Baumrind (1978), the authoritative parenting style encompasses more socially desirable parental behaviors while the authoritarian and permissive styles include more socially undesirable behaviors. According to Baumrind (1978), authoritative discipline tends to foster in children a "particular kind of social, or 'instrumental,' competence which is associated with success in Western society" (p. 245).

For purposes of this study, parenting style will be conceptually defined as the positive (or socially acceptable) and negative (or socially unacceptable) ways in which parents act and react to children's behaviors. Parenting style, including parental demands and expectations, is influenced by societal expectations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For purposes of this study, type of family system and parenting style is most closely aligned with the work of Steinhauer (1983), a process-oriented and dynamic

model of family functioning, which is equally capable of describing successful and unsuccessful patterns of type of family system (cohesion and adaptability) and parenting style (positive and negative). (Figure 1) The model emphasizes understanding each parameter as having a separate identity yet having ongoing contact with adjoining parameters and subsystems (parameter to parameter, interpersonal to social, etc.) so that change can occur at any or several levels. Any point of contact between two subsystems, such as parents and children or enmeshed parent-child, is a site of either actual or potential tension.

Pressure for change at a point of contact can come from within (for example, when a family member unilaterally changes) or from without (when a therapist facilitates change). Whether the new input will be accommodated (leading to a new balance and equilibrium) or rejected, will depend on a number of factors including a family's adaptive potential or level of adaptability. A family's adaptability, according to Steinhauer (1985), includes the capacities to: define, negotiate and accomplish tasks; adjust roles as needed to ensure complementarity and role performance; provide and tolerate communication; and accommodate members' needs for autonomy. An unbalanced point of contact between subsystems generates actual tension and pressure for change until a new balance is established between the two or more subsystems. For example, a mother experiencing a new, financially-necessary full time job in another city (necessitating a long commute) may grieve her old career and work associates, dislike having less time with her family, feel pressure to provide for the family financially, and detest a longer travel time. Her children may experience the mother's tensions indirectly through their own anxieties. Who will

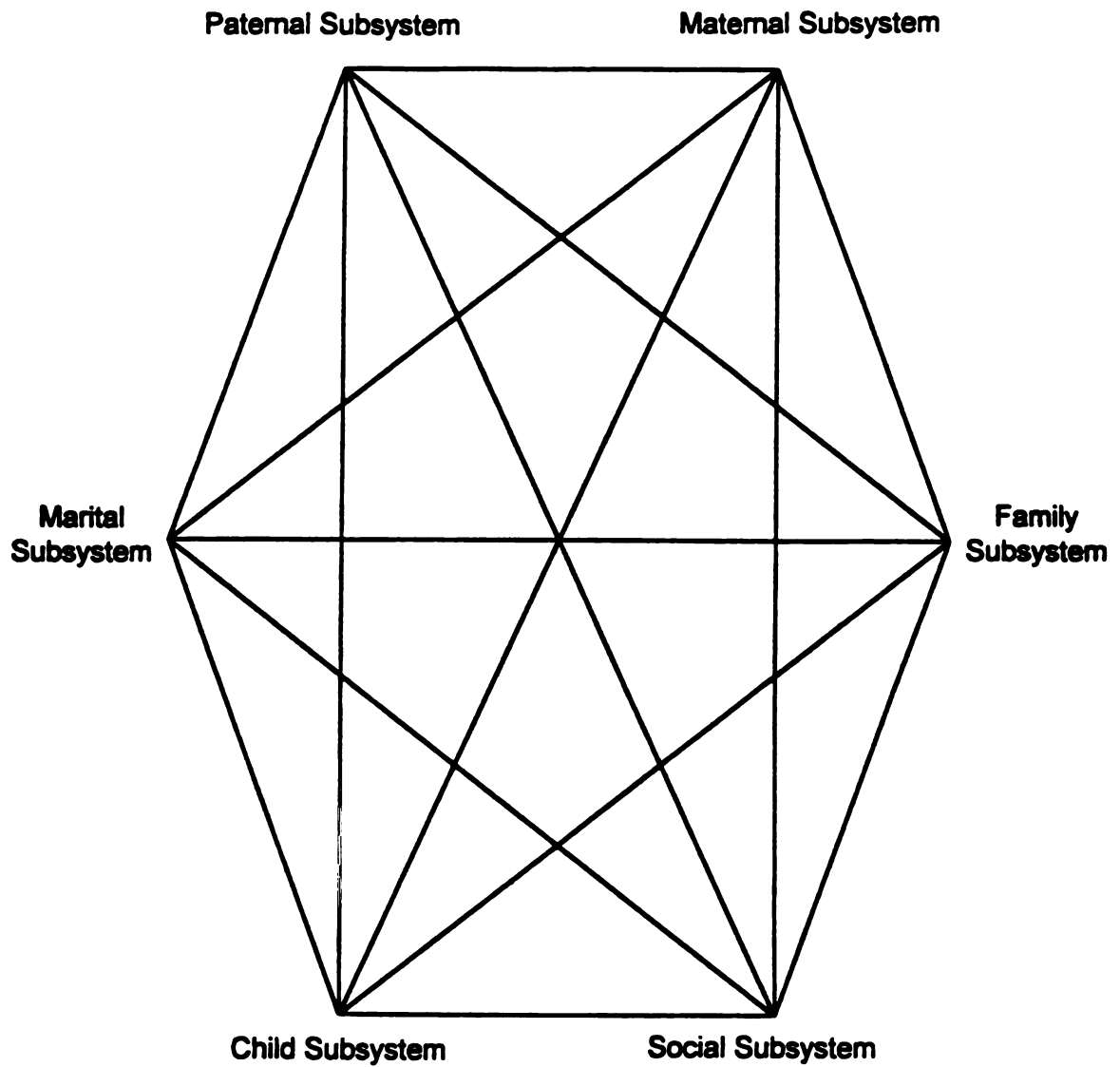


Figure 1. Steinhauer Process Model of Family Functioning (Steinhauer & Dickman, 1983, p. 106).

help with homework or shuttle to extracurricular activities? Is there enough money to pay for the activities? Change may ensue after the first unacceptable school report card (or other negative behavior) which one or both of the involved subsystems perceive as attributable to the mother's employment. Change may also be positive as more shared parenting evolves (i.e., father may help with homework or shuttling children to activities in the mother's absence). If the point of contact is in balance (i.e., the majority of maternal and child behaviors are positive), no conscious anxiety or pressure for change is evoked.

Some actual tension is a prerequisite for appropriate adaptation and normal development. There is an optimal range of experienced tension; too much tension is overwhelming and disabling, whereas too little tension impedes the appropriate identification and solution of difficulties that are undermining adjustment and ongoing development. As Steinhauer (1983) emphasizes, pressure for change can be internally or externally generated. In the above example, a substandard report card may not be high priority or problematic for the mother or child, but may be viewed by school officials (the larger society) as being socially undesirable. Internally generated tension effects change in the family system.

Adaptation of the Steinhauer (1983) model is presented in Figure 2 as it relates to this research project. Specifically maternal subsystem (working professional mothers), parenting style (positive and negative), and type of family system (cohesion and adaptability) will be examined. Additionally, the relationship between type of family system and parenting style will be examined. "Anxiety or pressure to change" experienced by the individual or subsystem will reflect adaptability. Parenting style is a response to

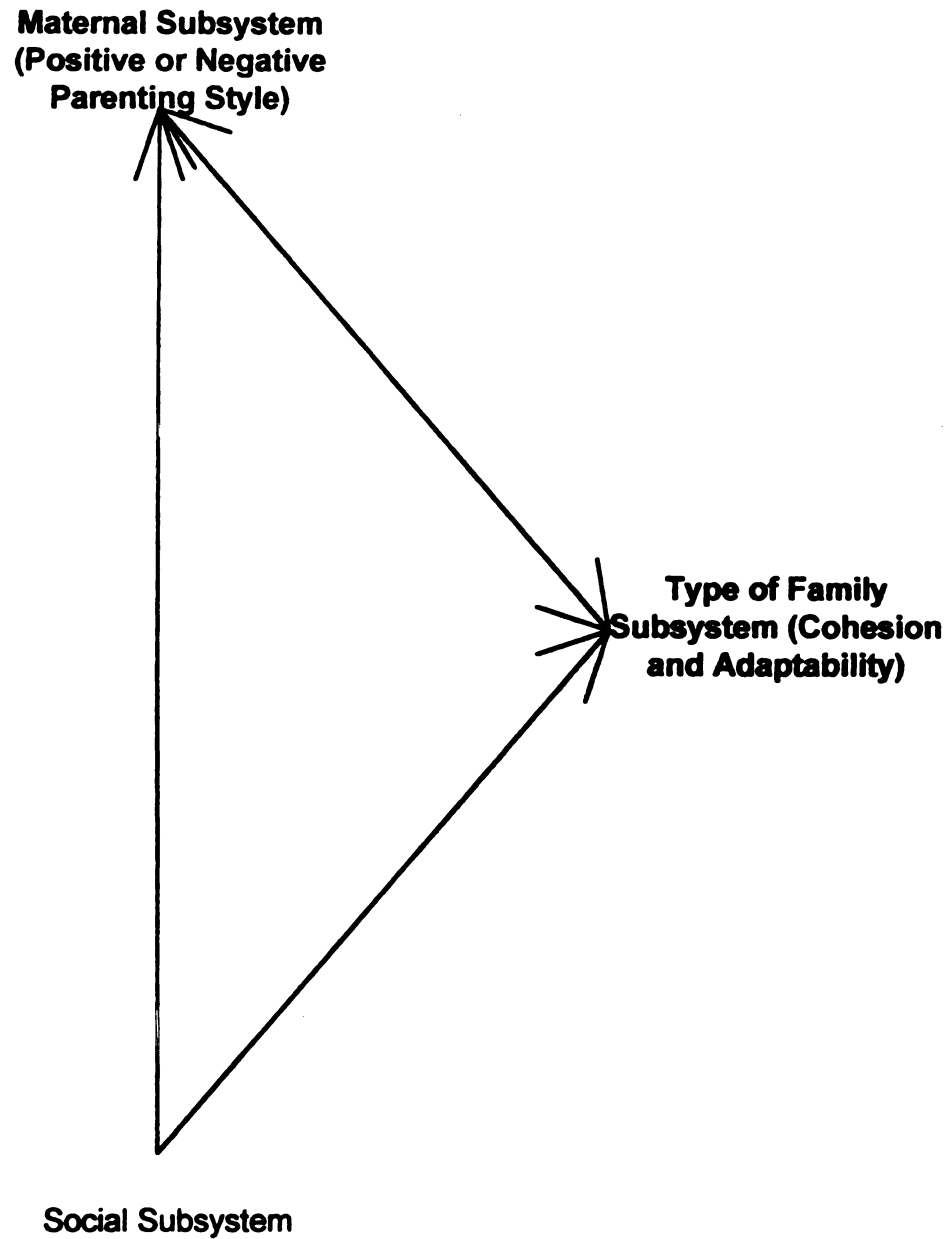


Figure 2. Adaptation of Steinhauser Process Model of Family Functioning (Steinhauer & Dickman, 1983, p. 106).

internal (family system) and external (societal) tensions. Type of family system and parenting style are dynamic processes operating individually and as subsystems.

“Anesthetized” families may tolerate years of progressive disengagement, rigidity, enmeshment or socially unacceptable (negative) parenting, or a combination of these behaviors, without experiencing enough conscious tension to precipitate needed adaptations. Similarly, chronically excessive tension levels result in stress overload, particularly when multiple areas, such as type of family system and parenting style contribute to increased tension in the entire system.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to examine type of family system and parenting styles of working professional mothers and to explore the relationship between type of family system (cohesion and adaptability) and parenting styles. This study is significant in that identifying type of family system and parenting styles of working professional women will aid in understanding the needs of “healthy” children and families from a “preventative and care” standpoint rather than a “cure” orientation. In turn, health care providers caring for employed women and their families may base care on more complete and accurate information. The current newsstand focus, replete with “cookbooks” on child care, reflects a market hungry for descriptions of the two-career, post-modern family. It is the intent of this research to add to that body of knowledge. Specifically, the focus of this study is to respond to the following research questions:

1. What is the type of family system (cohesion and adaptability) perceived by the working professional mother?
2. What is the parenting style (positive or negative) of the working professional

mother?

3. Is the type of family system (cohesion and adaptability) related to the style of parenting, (positive or negative) in the families of working professional mothers?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The empirical evidence relevant to the problem under investigation falls into three main areas of study: a) Maternal employment; b) type of parenting style (positive and negative); and c) family system (cohesion and adaptability).

Maternal employment

Prior to the 1980s most efforts to explain why parents rear their children the way they do focused on social class (Belsky, 1990). However the more contemporary approach has been an increased attempt to move beyond “social-address” models of environmental influence. Today research more commonly examines processes that have an impact on parent-child relations, for example, parental responsiveness, attachment security, and/or the overall socioemotional development and functioning of children. Two themes cut across research on the multiple determinants of parenting: a) the influence of parent-child relations upon child development and b) the effects of day care (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990).

Most studies indicate that maternal employment has an overall positive impact on children and family life. Employed women cite self-actualization; expanded role models for children; enhanced children’s maturity and self-reliance; and improved financial status for the family as positive aspects of employment (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990). When a mother’s experience of her role is negative (either as employed mother or homemaker),

detrimental effects are more likely to accrue to her children (Spitze, 1988). Additionally, research has shown that employed and unemployed women spend equal amounts of face-to-face time with their children (Nock & Kingston, 1988). Possible explanations for this similarity are that stay-at-home mothers (while at home) may not spend all of their time 1:1 with children and may suffer from parent burnout or lack of parenting skills.

Employed mothers may tend to maximize the amount of time they do have with their children and thus have an increased 1:1 interaction time. When mothers are employed, it is homemaking rather than child-centered activities that suffer. Hill and Stafford (1985) found that employed women make time for their children by sacrificing time they would otherwise devote to housework or leisure.

Elkind (1994) does not specifically discuss the individual parenting style of the working mother but identifies the overall parental shift in the postmodern, permeable, dual career family from unilateral to mutual responsibility and a climate of authoritative parenting. Type of family system is seen as moving away from togetherness and towards autonomy or the need of each family member to be able to “go it alone” (Elkind, 1994, p. 75). None of the studies found specifically examine the relationship between employment status of the mother and type of family system, and/or parenting style.

The literature focuses on short term rather than long term benefits and/or deleterious consequences to children and families, in part due to methodological limitations which restrict cause-effect relations directly impinging on children and families. Barling and VanBart (1984) found that the higher the mothers' interrole conflict, the greater the likelihood that their sons manifested conduct problems and their daughters,

immaturity. Many questions of why and how children's behavior is affected by mothers' employment remain unanswered. Because maternal employment has become the rule rather than the exception in just the past 25 years and thus a relatively new societal concept, long range effects of maternal employment can now be assessed (Hoffman, 1989; Spitze, 1988). In general, the literature points to a positive association between maternal employment and parenting. The need to look at family processes (i.e., division of family tasks) rather than simple structure, (i.e., maternal employment vs. non-employment, paternal employment vs. non-employment) is indicated. Factors which effect a positive or negative maternal employment experience, and thus positive or negative consequences for children, are increasingly being considered.

Parenting style

As background, it is important to note that mothers play a determining role in the way their children develop, either consciously and conscientiously, or by default (Baumrind, 1967). Even among maternal caretakers of the same culture or subculture, disagreement exists concerning which values are important to inculcate in children and how children should be reared to become responsible members of society. The concept of parenting style reflecting parental disciplinary practices arose as an indicator of a family's resources leading to child competence in meeting societal expectations (Amato & Ochiltree, 1986).

An individual's life history precedes the role of parent and impacts one's parenting style. Repeatedly it has been found that adults who are psychologically healthy and mature are more likely to provide care that promotes healthy psychological development

in their offspring (Belsky, 1990).

Research on parenting style is often correlated with child behavior as a reciprocal process; clear evidence emerges that mothers react to disobedient, negative, and/or highly active children with negative, controlling behavior (Anderson, Lytton, & Romney, 1986). Although the more recent work of Bugental, Blue and Cruzcosa (1989) reveals that parents vary in their susceptibility to such child effects, child temperament also factors into parenting style but is beyond the scope of this present study.

Because of these influences and individual differences in both parent and child, Dibble and Cohen (1974) propose the concept of self-report in order to raise parent awareness of competencies and areas of vulnerability. The original intent of their work was to better understand genetic, familial and experiential contributions to personality development in twin children but their work has ramifications for guiding the parent in analysis of parenting style. By measuring a parent's perception of his or her own parental style in relation to a particular child, parental attitudes are illicited and encourage the parent to accurately assess both actual and ideal parenting behaviors (Parents' Report). Their companion instrument, the Childhood Personality Scale, allows the parent to report the child's general personality and competence but consideration of a child's innate temperament is beyond the scope of this present study.

In addition, Dibble and Cohen (1974) classify positive or socially acceptable parenting style into behavior clusters such as "acceptance of child as a person," "child centeredness," and "control through positive discipline." Negative or socially unacceptable parenting style clusters include "detachment," "lax enforcement of

discipline,” and “control through hostility.” Using this method of categorizing takes into account the interdependency of parent, child and society.

Other research on parenting style is devoted to actual child outcome. In contrast to the self-report method of Dibble and Cohen (1974), Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts and Fraleigh (1987) in an analysis of 7,836 San Francisco Bay high schoolers, found that negative or socially unacceptable parenting styles (which they labeled as authoritarian and permissive parenting styles) were negatively associated with grades. Authoritative parenting (more socially acceptable or positive parenting style) was positively associated with grades. Parents that inconsistently combined authoritarian parenting with other parenting styles had children with the lowest grades. In addition, Steinberg, Elmen and Mounts (1989) found that authoritative parenting facilitates, rather than simply accompanies, school success.

Parenting style has also been linked with child self-esteem. Children are likely to internalize the negative evaluations implied by inattentive or negative parents. A child whose parents are unresponsive to his/her mastery attempts is unlikely to form a self-image of efficacy and control (Amato & Ochiltree, 1986).

Yet another child outcome of parenting style is social competence, ranked highest in children from authoritative homes, homes in which positive parenting style occurs (Schor, 1995). For girls, this authoritative parenting style is associated with purposeful, dominant, and achievement-oriented behaviors. Boys from authoritative homes demonstrate friendly, cooperative and socially responsible behavior. In contrast, among children of permissive parents, girls are less assertive and independent, and boys, less

achievement-oriented. Both sexes scored well on social responsibility with permissive parenting.

In summary, parenting style is a reflection of societal expectations and the life histories of parents which ultimately influence child outcomes. A child's innate temperament also factors into the parenting style elicited. The parenting style in general can be regarded as socially acceptable (positive) or socially unacceptable (negative).

Family cohesion and adaptability

Research is more limited in the area of family cohesion and adaptability as coined by Olson (1983). Olson (1983) merges the concepts to form varying degrees or categories of "balance." Many abstracts describe Olson's tool and how the Circumplex Model was normed using as subjects chronically-ill children or destructive parent-child dyads (Garabino, Sebes, & Schellenbach, 1984; Rodich, Henggler, & Hanson, 1986). Several abstracts and dissertation proposals propose examination of the relationship of cohesion/adaptability and outcomes such as problem-solving, marital satisfaction, dual career-couples and family satisfaction. Two of the four studies on dual career couples are in progress. The completed studies focus on dual-clergy marriages and spouse-work relationships which pose additional unique dynamics. No studies to date examine dual career families using the Olson tool to measure cohesion and adaptability.

Several studies (Bryant, 1992; Bryant & Zick, 1996; Nock & Kingston, 1988) examine parent-child shared time (e.g., eating dinner and exchanging information) from a family economist perspective. However in estimating a product function, Leibowitz (1974) contends measures of the activities undertaken and the exclusivity of the use of

time (e.g., parents' attention focused exclusively on the child) are indicated. How time is spent with children ("quality") is more important than how much time is spent. Time spent belittling a child in a socially unacceptable manner, (i.e., negative parenting), or encounters in which disengagement is prevalent while parent and child perform a task together, (i.e., indications of type of family system) are viewed as more important than simple task completion. One way to quantify quality of time spent is to look at levels of interaction identifying which behaviors are necessary but not sufficient in parent-child relations.

Enmeshment, as described by Olson (1983), is the highest level of cohesion in which there is too much consensus within the family and too little independence. Barber and Buehler (1996) propose that cohesion and enmeshment are not comparable concepts, particularly when examining preadolescents/adolescents. In their study of 471 students in 5th, 8th and 10th grades, enmeshment, as a psychological control, was related positively with youth problems; cohesion was found to be a supportive interaction positively related to individual and family function. The researchers contend that cohesion and enmeshment are independent constructs when applied to adolescents, not different degrees of the same construct. They claim that intrusion into a child's psychological development (enmeshment) inhibits individualization and social interaction skills.

Type of family system has been described in terms of parental involvement (LaRossa, 1988). The three identified areas of involvement are: a) Engagement (direct, one-on-one interaction); b) accessibility (being nearby and available to meet a child's need); and c) responsibility (being accountable for the child's care and welfare). The

emphasis of the research is placed on maternal versus paternal time spent in each of these areas rather than on describing and comparing one area of involvement with another (e.g. engagement, which would include emotional attachment/cohesion, and a more “disengaged” involvement, accessibility). Likewise, the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983) does not differentiate between the levels of interaction which may be critical in assessing family dynamics in future studies: Can balanced and responsible families have limited engagement interaction? Can a family be balanced and responsible yet not be accessible?

McFarlane, Bellissimo and Norman (1994) is perhaps the most noteworthy if not only, study most directly related to the present research. The study assessed the association between parental style, family functioning and adolescent well-being. Results indicated that the parental style was the main determinant of both family functioning and well being of adolescents. Several tools were employed including IDD (Inventory to Diagnose Depression), PBI (Parental Bonding Scale to assess parental style), Adolescent Stress measure, FAD (Family Assessment Device) and FACES III. Although the parenting style tool (PBI) used varies from the tool used to measure parenting style in the proposed research, parenting style is described and compared with type of family system. McFarlane, Bellissimo and Norman (1994) found that both mother and father parenting style (including affection, warmth, empathy and reciprocity to coldness and indifference) were associated with a type of family system. Over protection as a parenting style (excessive intrusion and infantilization versus independence and autonomy) was negatively associated with a balanced type of family system. A limitation to the study is lack of a

concise definition of type of family function (reflective of family system in terms of cohesion and adaptability) so that this research can be compared with similar studies.

Critique of the literature

Overall in reviewing the literature, a lack of consensus on terms to define one particular concept (e.g., cohesion) and a multiplicity of tools measuring like concepts is observed. Adaptability as a separate characteristic of family system type is not mentioned in the literature except for Olson (1983) and his followers specifically using FACES II and FACES III. Other problems in measuring parenting style and type of family system involve older instruments which are geared solely toward the family in distress (a chronically ill child, an ill parent or behavior problems). Also, older tools were developed on more traditional families in which mothers were not employed.

Types of families that have been studied using the Olson (1989) model present unique situations (e.g., farm families, military families, single parent families, missionary families or extended families) or are in relation to a specific problem (e.g., alcoholism, chemical dependency, incest, handicapped, learning disabled, mental illness or violence-abuse). As mentioned earlier, only two studies examine dual career families and this research pertains to shared careers, a clergy couple and a joint business venture. No studies to date look at dual career families with separate occupations.

An obvious gap in the literature is the correlation between type of family system and parenting style in general. The literature addresses one concept or the other but does not integrate the two concepts.

The intent of this study is to examine the type of family system and parenting style

of working professional women and the relationship between type of family system and parenting style. Present dynamics operating in a family may help health care providers to identify actual and potential areas of family system imbalance (in terms of cohesion and adaptability) and deficits in parental style. Parents and health care providers can use this data to develop interventions which can potentially improve family processes.

METHODOLOGY

Type of family system and parenting styles are the major constructs of this study. The descriptive, non-experimental and cross-sectional study examines the relationship of the type of family system and parenting styles.

Population and Sample

The sample for the study was derived from a longitudinal study with an original sample of 158 working professional mothers recruited to address issues of role conflict, chronic stress and strain, marital, parental and life role satisfaction and function (Tiedje, 1990). The present study was in conjunction with the original study of Tiedje (1985) and continued in the summer of 1996 with Sigma Theta Tau funding. The respondents were residents of Chicago, Detroit, Lansing and Ann Arbor, and were employed in banking, advertising, accounting, law, or higher education instruction. The respondents at the time of initial contact (beginning in 1985) were married, had a preschool child, and were employed 30 hours a week or more. For the purposes of this study, a subset of these subjects was selected from a Summer 1996 questionnaire. Respondents were asked to respond to the questions:

1. Have there been any major changes or events in your life since the last time we

- contacted you in 1993? We're interested in both good and bad things.
2. Are there other experiences you may not have shared with us before, that you think are important for us to know?

A sample size of 54 was proposed based on the 54 women who mentioned children in response to the above questions. Permission had already been obtained for use of the sample by Tiedje; human subjects approval was granted for the summer questionnaire and again in October 1996 for this subsample. Permission to use the Olson Circumplex Model (1983) was also obtained from the principal investigator.

The questionnaires, consisting of a short demographic inquiry and two aforementioned tools (Appendices A and B) were mailed October 17, 1996 to the selected 54 working professional mothers with the request to respond within four weeks; thirty-seven women responded within this time frame yielding a response rate of 68.5%. Ties that stress (Elkind, 1994) was awarded to the first ten respondents as an additional incentive for timely response. Follow-up phone calls and/or letters to the remaining non-respondents yielded a final response rate of 85.6% (N=48) as of December 16, 1996. One final questionnaire was received two weeks later but was excluded since statistical analysis had already been initiated.

Operationalization of variables

Two instruments were used to measure the constructs proposed in this model. The first instrument, measuring cohesion and adaptability, was FACES II (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1983), a well-established instrument used to assess type of family system (cohesion and adaptability). (Appendix A) This tool is consistently and abundantly

referred to in the literature as reliable and valid. According to Olson (1994) there are now over 1200 studies that are completed or in progress using the FACES II self-report assessment scale for families. Abstracts on all studies (dual career families= 4, family relationships=31, parent-child relationships=17, individual development/socialization=6) are obtainable from the University of Minnesota. Cronbach alpha figures for this tool are cohesion (.87), adaptability (.78) with a total scale of .90. Test-retest reliability yields coefficients of .83 (cohesion) and .80 (adaptability). Content validity was established from the 204 question FACES I; construct validity via factor analysis revealed loadings of .34-.61 (cohesion) and .10-.55 (adaptability).

The 30 item questionnaire, 16 cohesion items and 14 adaptability items, asked the respondent to decide how frequently a described behavior occurred in her family. The ratings ranged on a Likert scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). A linear scoring method for type of family system indicates cohesion and adaptability as independent parts of a family system. (Table 1) Olson also scores cohesion and adaptability together as a unit. Cohesion and adaptability are scored independently in this manner: The four categories for cohesion are: a) very connected (8-7), b) connected (6-5), c) separated (4-3), and d) disengaged (2-1). The four categories for adaptability are: a) very flexible (8-7), b) flexible (6-5), c) structured (4-3), and d) rigid (2-1). Additionally, the sum of cohesion and adaptability scores are divided by two to classify the type of family system as: a) balanced (8-7), b) moderately balanced (6-5), c) mid-range (4-3), and d) extreme (2-1). The instrument is easily administered on an individual basis and simply scored. Furthermore, it was conducive to working professional mothers responding by

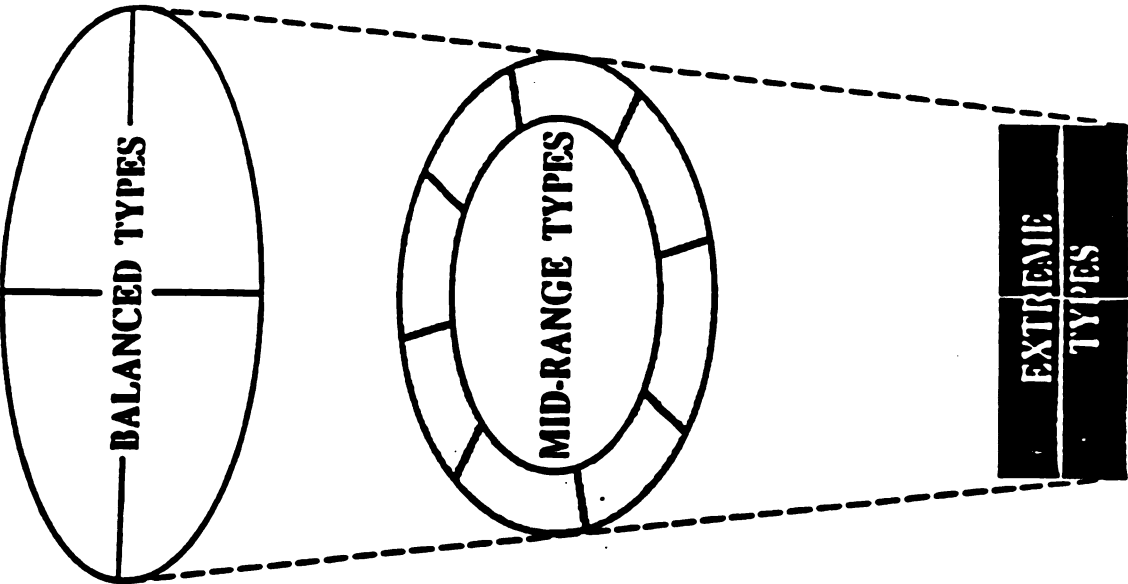


Table 1: FACES II: Linear scoring and interpretation

Cohesion				Adaptability				Family Type	
8	80	Very Connected		8	70	Very Flexible		8	Balanced
	74			7	65			7	
7	73	Connected		6	64	Flexible		6	Moderately Balanced
	71			5	55			5	
6	70	Connected		4	54	Structured		4	Mid-Range
	65			3	50			3	
5	64	Connected		2	49	Rigid		2	Extreme
	60			1	46			1	
4	59	Separated		4	45				
	55				43				
3	54	Separated		3	42				
	51				40				
2	50	Disengaged		2	39			2	
	35			1	30			1	
1	34	Disengaged		1	29				
	15				15				

___ Cohesion + ___ Adaptability = Type

mail.

To operationalize parenting style, a second instrument, Parents' Report (Dibble & Cohen, 1974) was employed. (Appendix B) An abbreviated version of this tool was used by Tiedje (1983) in the original study as part of a more lengthy interview schedule.

The original Parents Report (employed in this study) consisted of 48 behavioral description items. Sixteen behavioral styles (three items each) with eight positive (socially acceptable) and eight negative (socially unacceptable) styles were included. Positive parenting style categories included: "Acceptance of child as a person," "child centeredness," "sensitivity to feeling," positive involvement," "acceptance of autonomy," "shared decision making," "consistent enforcement of discipline," and "control through positive discipline." Negative parenting style categories included: "Detachment," "intrusiveness," "lax enforcement of discipline," inconsistent enforcement of discipline," "control through anxiety," "control through guilt," "control through hostility," and "withdrawal of relationship."

Three items were included for each of the eight positive and eight negative parenting styles. For example, responses to: a) "I explain to him/her why he/she is being punished;" b) "I set limits for activities to help him/her stay out of trouble;" and c) "I let him/her express his/her feelings about being punished or restricted;" were summed and divided by three to indicate "control through positive discipline." The parent was asked to decide how often the specific parental style/interaction occurred with their child(ren) in general in the last month using a Likert scale from 1 (always) to 7 (never). High scores on the 8 socially desirable/positive categories (and low scores on the undesirable/negative

categories) revealed a positive or socially desirable parenting style whereas low scores on desirable categories and (high scores on undesirable categories) indicated a negative parenting style. As far as overall reliability, test-retest and inter-item correlations within and between categories were performed. The reliability and validity of the instrument were established but not reported (Dibble & Cohen, 1974). Dibble and Cohen (1974) found that total scores (total positive and/or total negative scores) were less sensitive and not as useful as category scores (comparing individual behaviors with overall positive/desirable or negative/undesirable parenting style). Reliabilities, individually and categorically, were established for this group of subjects.

The results of type of family system and parenting style using the above instruments allowed for further correlational examination.

RESULTS

Demographics

Demographics revealed a fairly homogenous group of 48 respondents primarily residing in Detroit (N=15), Chicago (N=12), Lansing (N=9) and Ann Arbor (N=7). (Table 2) Two respondents have relocated to the East Coast (New York and Virginia). The mean age of the working professional women responding was 45.7 years, with 98% between ages 39-47 (N=47). Married women composed 92% (N=44) of the sample with four divorcees/single women. Average number of years married was 17.3.

There were 96 children among the 48 respondents. The sex of the children was fairly evenly distributed: females (N=53) and males (N=43). Sixteen (33%) were only children and 43% (N=21) had one sibling (two children in the family). (See Table 3 for

further descriptions of children.) The mean age for children was 11.9 years. The two largest age groups of children were 12-13 year olds (N=23) and 14-15 year olds (N=20); 43% of the children were between 12 and 15 years old; 47% were teenagers (13-19 year olds). Sixty-nine percent of respondents (N=33) reported at least one teenager in the family; this percentage increased to 85% (N=41) when the pre-teen age of 12 was also included. The high percentage of teens is especially salient to note in view of the fact that parents traditionally find teen years present unique and often difficult challenges. Of the sixty-nine percent, nine respondents reported two teens, and one respondent indicated three teens in the family.

Table 2: Demographics

	N=48	Mean	S.D.	Range
Respondent's age (in years)		45.7	4.5	35-54
35	1 (2%)			
39	5 (10%)			
40-43	7 (15%)			
44-47	15 (32%)			
48-50	16 (33%)			
51-54	4 (8%)			
Marital status				
Married	44 (92%)			
Divorced	4 (8%)			
Years of marriage		17.3	5.1	3-27
3-10	3 (7%)			
12-20	31 (71%)			
21-27	10 (22%)			
Number of children	96	1.98	1.9	1-5
Male	43 (45%)			
Female	53 (55%)			
Age of children (in years)		11.9	3.7	1-20
Hours worked (per week)		46.3	11.2	12-65
Family income (in \$1000)		104.8	58.3	28.-250.

Table 3: Children: Number per family, number of teens per family, and age distribution

Number of children per family	(N=96)
1	16 (33%)
2	21 (43%)
3	8 (17%)
4	2 (4%)
5	1 (2%)
Number of teens (ages 13-19) per family	(N=33)
1	23 (70%)
2	9 (27%)
3	1 (3%)
Ages of children (in years)	
1-7	10
8-9	16
10-11	14
12-13	23
14-15	20
16-17	8
18-20	5

Forty-two percent of respondents (N=20) identified themselves as professors and teachers; nineteen respondents (39%) identified themselves as business women/professionals having careers in banking (N=5), advertising (N=4), law (N=2), medicine (N=3), and accounting (N=2). Varied other careers included office manager, product managers, computer analyst, consultants, artist, speech pathologist and registered nurse. Many of the respondents regarded themselves as both professor/teacher and professional and labeled themselves interchangeably in these years since the original study (1985). For this reason, occupation did not play a major factor in demographic analysis. Only one respondent indicated she was no longer employed.

Employed hours worked ranged from 12 to 70 hours per week. The majority

(N=32, or 66%) worked 35-55 hours per week. Nineteen of the 48 respondents (39%) reported working more than 50 hours per week. Mean number of hours worked per week is 46.2.

Seventy percent of the 48 respondents have a masters degree or higher level of education. The distribution was masters' degree (N=12), PhD (N=16), JD (N=3) and MD (N=3). Five respondents reported not having completed a bachelors' degree. There were two missing values.

Combined family income after taxes ranged between \$75,000-85,000 (N=7) and \$90,000-100,000 (N=13). Nine respondents reported family income levels of \$150,000-200,000 while four women reported incomes of less than \$40,000. Ten percent of respondents did not indicate level of income. Mean income was \$104,810; this figure, however, may be misleading due to the relatively large number of missing values, the presence of single earner households, and one respondent's exclusion of her husband's income from the family income figure for unknown reasons.

Research question one

In answer to the first research question concerning type of family system, or the level of family cohesion and adaptability, perceived by the working professional woman, 58% (N=28) reported their families as "moderately-balanced" (score = 6.5-5). (Table 4) Four families were classified as "extreme" (less cohesive/less adaptive with scores 2.5-1) while three families achieved "balanced" (more cohesive/more adaptive or scores of 7.5-7) levels. The remaining respondents (N=13) reported "mid-range" with scores of 4.5-3.

Table 4: Type of Family System (N=48)

	Mean	S.D.	Variance	Possible range	Actual range
Cohesion					
Raw	62.1	8.5	71.9	15-80	43-77
Category	5.0	1.6	2.5	1-8	2-8
Adaptability					
Raw	47.9	5.9	34.7	15-70	46-54
Category	4.9	1.5	2.2	2-7	2-7
Family type (category)				(N of families)	
Balanced (category score 7.0-8.0)				3	
Moderately balanced (category score 5.0-6.5)				28	
Mid-Range (category score 3.0-4.5)				13	
Extreme (category score 1.0-2.5)				4	

General mid-range type of family system (“moderately balanced” and “mid-range” categories with scores of 6.5-3.0) as well as mid-range levels of cohesion and adaptability are desired in that these levels are hypothesized to be most viable for healthy family functioning (Olson, 1989).

Olson (1989) recommends analysis of the two components of family system separately so that for example, a family that is both “very connected” and “rigid” (opposite ends of the cohesion and adaptability scoring tool) equates misleadingly to a “mid-range” type of family system. Raw scores on both cohesion and adaptability were analyzed. Olson (1989) suggests using raw scores to enhance correlations. Separately, the level of cohesion most often reported is “connected” (54%, N=26) or raw scores of 60-70 (category scores of 6.5-5.0). (Table 5) The mean score was 62.1. Olson (1989) considers raw scores 51-70 (“connected” and “separated” categories with scores 6.5-3.0)

as desirable mid-range values.

The most frequent level of adaptability was “flexible” (raw scores 46-54 or category scores 6.0-5.0) with mean of 47.9. Again, raw scores 40-54 (“structured” and “flexible” or 6.0-3.0) are desired levels of adaptability according to Olson (1989).

Respondents were clearly on the upper limits of this desired level of adaptability.

Adaptability scores had less range (22) than did cohesion scores (range=34) with a variance of 34.7 as compared to the variance of cohesion, 71.9.

Table 5: Levels of cohesion and adaptability

Cohesion level		Range (raw score)
Very connected	6 (13%)	71-77
Connected	26 (54%)	60-70
Separated	11 (23%)	51-58
Disengaged	5 (10%)	43-50
Adaptability level		
Very Flexible	6 (13%)	55-59
Flexible	25 (52%)	46-54
Structured	13 (27%)	40-45
Rigid	4 (8%)	37-38

Research question two

The second research question asks, what is the parenting style of working professional women? Overall, positive parenting style (summing eight positive behaviors developed from three questions each) was more frequent than negative parenting style (sum of eight negative behaviors of three questions each) with means 5.6 (representing “frequently” to “almost always” for the positive behaviors), and 2.8 (representing “almost never” to “seldom” for the negative behaviors), with possible range 1-7 (“never” to

“always”). (Tables 6 and 7) However, in both cases, idiosyncratic spikes were evident, particularly with negative parenting style in which the mode was significantly lower (2.0) than the mean (2.8). Amato and Ochiltree (1986) showed large variances between and within group subjects and likewise for this group of working professional women there was some variation in positive and negative parenting style.

Table 6: Positive parenting style distribution scores (Possible range 1-7)

Parental style	Mean	S.D.	Actual Range
Child acceptance	6.35	.54	4.7-7.0
Positive involvement	6.12	.70	4.7-7.0
Child centeredness	6.00	.67	4.0-7.0
Control through positive discipline	5.96	.86	3.0-7.0
Sensitive to feeling	5.38	.80	2.7-6.7
Acceptance of autonomy	5.38	.53	4.0-6.3
Shared decision-making	5.18	.66	4.0-7.0
Consistent enforcement of discipline	5.03	1.05	2.0-7.0
Positive parenting (8 clusters combined, 3 items each)	5.67	.50	4.3-6.7

Table 7: Negative parenting style distribution scores (Possible range 1-7)

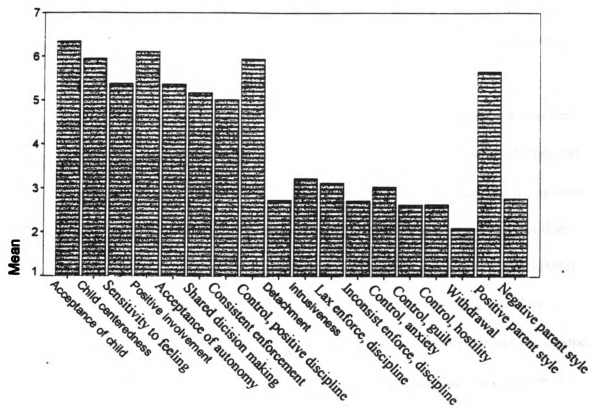
Parenting style	Mean	S.D.	Actual Range
Intrusiveness	3.23	1.00	1.7-5.7
Lax enforcement of discipline	3.13	.81	1.0-5.0
Control through anxiety	3.04	.89	1.3-5.3
Detachment	2.73	.70	1.0-4.3
Control through hostility	2.65	.80	1.3-4.3
Control through guilt	2.64	1.01	1.0-5.0
Withdrawal	2.11	.96	1.0-5.0
Negative parenting (8 clusters combined, 3 items each)	2.78	.48	1.9-3.7

Another line of reasoning is that more meaningful data can be obtained from individual cluster scores (three questions about one aspect of parenting style) as suggested by Dibble and Cohen (1974). As mentioned previously, individual reliabilities for positive and negative parenting style and each cluster score were performed but not available (Dibble & Cohen, 1974). Alphas were performed in the present study on each cluster score with the appropriate summation category (eight parental behaviors) of either positive or negative parenting style. Collectively, alphas for positive parenting style and individual positive clusters were .86, and for negative parenting style and negative clusters, .75.

For each individual parenting style question, scores ranged from 1.00 to 7.00. The value for each parenting cluster behavior was computed by finding the mean of the three questions measuring each particular parenting behavior. Table 8 is a summary of means for the various clusters as well as total positive and total negative parenting style mean results. Individual positive parenting scores were higher than individual negative scores (as well as summation category scores) indicating that women in this study were more apt to employ positive parenting styles than negative styles. Range in negative parenting scores was smaller (2.67–4.00) than scores for positive parenting (2.33–5.00) indicating less quantitative variation in negative parenting style than positive parenting style.

A “child acceptance” level of 6.00 or greater (“almost always” to “always”) was present for 40 of the 48 respondents (83%). The mean for this category (6.35) was higher than any other category, positive or negative, indicating working professional women had a high positive acceptance of their child. Issues of child acceptance by the

Table 8: Mean distribution of positive and negative parenting style and individual parenting clusters



parent was not immediately obvious in the current literature reviewed, but only suggested as a more complicated piece of a two-way relationship, parent and child, in which “mutual respect” is fostered (Elkind, 1994).

The next most frequently occurring individual parenting style was “positive involvement” with mean of 6.12. The relative importance of this characteristic is surprising in view of the literature purporting 1:1 parent-child interaction (engagement) may not be present in parent-adolescent relations (Demo, 1992).

The smallest mean (5.03) (5=“frequently”) occurred for “consistent enforcement of discipline.” Of all positive parenting behaviors, this behavior was still endorsed frequently but it was most infrequent. The literature hints at inconsistencies on many parenting issues among a variety of caregivers, maternal, paternal and supplemental (day care), but does not single out consistent discipline as particularly important (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990).

“Control through positive discipline” scored 6.33-7.00 (“almost always” to “always”) in 24 cases with mean of 5.96. This positive parenting behavior had the second highest mode with ten respondents scoring 6.33. (Acceptance of child had a mode of 6.67 with 13 respondents.) This cluster group was one of the four most frequently occurring behaviors.

The next most prevalent negative behaviors dealt with issues of discipline. “Lax enforcement” and “inconsistent enforcement of discipline” were employed with relative frequency but not nearly as frequently as its positive counterpart mentioned previously, “consistent enforcement of discipline.” Twenty-four respondents (50%) reported “lax enforcement” scores of 3.33-5.00 (between “half the time” and “frequently”) and 14

respondents (29%) reported the same values for “inconsistent enforcement of discipline.”

“Withdrawal of relationship” was the least frequently encountered negative parenting style (N=38 for scores 1.-2.67, “never” to “seldom”). The working professional women in this study were more apt to employ any, either positive or negative individual behavior, than not to act/react to their children at all. It can be surmised from these findings, that these women tend to confront rather than avoid child interactions.

Research question three

The third research question addresses the question, is the type of family system (cohesive and adaptive) related to the style of parenting (positive or negative) in the families of working professional mothers?

Type of family system correlations and positive parenting

Type of family system was positively correlated with positive parenting style ($r=.49$, $p=.00$), in answer to the third research question. (Table 9) Cohesion ($r=.58$, $p=.00$) and raw cohesion ($r=.52$, $p=.00$) showed stronger correlations with positive parenting style than the combined type of family system (cohesion and adaptability). The correlation between adaptability and positive parenting style was .23 but was not significant ($p=.10$). It follows that in order to achieve a desirable overall general mid-range type of family system (categories of moderately balanced and mid-range) with a positive parenting style, emphasis should be placed on cohesion levels rather than the adaptability capabilities within the family since cohesion was shown here to be the statistically significant factor.

Table 9: Correlation of type of family system and positive parenting style

Parenting Style	Type of family system	Cohesion	Adaptability
Child acceptance	.22	.30*	.05
Child centeredness	.38*	.45**	.18
Sensitive to feelings	.35*	.36*	.21
Positive involvement	.29*	.30*	.17
Autonomy, acceptance	.35*	.21	.35*
Shared decisions	.35*	.24	.34*
Consistent discipline	.24	.34*	.02
Control through positive discipline	.48**	.55**	.19
Positive parenting (all 8 clusters)	.49**	.52**	.23

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .005$.

Because correlations between type of family system and parenting style were expected to vary with individual parenting behavior clusters as well as overall, individual parenting behavior clusters (i.e., “child centeredness,” “acceptance of child”, etc.) were also correlated with type of family system. The strongest correlation between type of family system and an individual positive parenting cluster was “control through positive discipline” ($r=.48$, $p=.00$). This individual positive cluster was also the most significant in relation to cohesion ($r=.59$, $p=.00$). Fifty percent ($N=24$) of respondents ranked this behavior as 6 or higher (“almost always” to “always”) and an additional 25% ($N=12$) indicated they employed “control through positive discipline” “at least half the time.” Nelson (1987) defines “positive discipline” as “firmness with dignity and respect,” allowing for “limited choices and freedom with order” (p. 12). According to Nelson (1987), positive discipline encourages self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation and

problem-solving skills in children. The popularity of self-help parenting books promotes parenting styles neither too permissive nor too punitive and which embrace “positive discipline.” This finding in the present study reflects not only current parenting trends but is a mirror to what Elkind (1994) terms the postmodern society in which human (both adult and child) diversity is honored and universal principles arise out of consensus.

Cohesion and adaptability correlations independently with positive parenting style

As stated previously, Olson (1989) states more meaningful statistics can be obtained by examining the two components of family system type, cohesion and adaptability. In addition to “control through positive discipline,” “child centeredness” was positively correlated to cohesion ($r=.50$, $p=.00$) but not significantly with adaptability. Consequently it is not surprising that “child centeredness” had a stronger correlation with cohesion than type of family system ($r=.38$, $p=.01$). Thus it would behoove a family desiring higher levels of cohesion alone to consider ways in which to enhance “child centeredness.”

Only two individual positive parenting behaviors were significant in terms of adaptability alone: “Acceptance of autonomy” ($r=.35$, $p=.02$) and “shared decision-making” ($r=.35$, $p=.02$). Obviously, “acceptance of autonomy” by mere definition was not significant for cohesion by itself ($p=.10$). “Shared decision-making” and cohesion also were not significant ($p=.11$). These findings imply that either cohesion or adaptability must be sacrificed for the other concept. A family only desiring higher levels of adaptability might center their efforts on increasing these two individual parenting behaviors.

Type of family system and negative parenting style

Type of family system and negative parenting style were negatively correlated ($r = -.53$, $p = .00$) (Table 10). Therefore, families with more negative parenting styles will be less apt to achieve general mid-range type of family system. All negative behavior clusters collectively had a stronger negative correlation than any individual negative behavior. The negative correlation between negative parenting style and type of family system was slightly stronger ($r = -.53$, $p = .00$) than the positive correlation between type of family system and positive parenting style ($r = .49$, $p = .00$).

Cohesion and adaptability correlations and negative parenting style

In examination of the components of type of family system and negative parenting style, stronger and more significant correlations were achieved with cohesion ($r = -.53$, $p = .00$) than adaptability ($r = -.37$, $p = .01$). In other words, cohesion tapped the concept of negative parenting style behavior more than did adaptability.

DISCUSSION

To summarize, the study showed that indeed 37 or 77.1% of respondents had balanced levels of cohesion (raw scores 51-70) and a slightly higher number, 38 or 79.2% (raw scores 40-54) of respondents professed to balanced levels of adaptability. The constructs together indicate that 41 (85.4%) of respondents did indeed exhibit an overall general mid-range type of family system (mid-range and moderately balanced categories, scores 3-4 and 5-6).

Table 10: Correlation of type of family system and negative parenting style

	Type of family system	Cohesion	Adaptability
Parenting style			
Control through hostility	-.35*	-.23	-.39*
Detachment	-.45**	-.65**	-.11
Inconsistent enforcement of discipline	-.43**	-.52**	-.18
Intrusiveness	.04	.08	-.01
Lax enforcement of discipline	-.25	-.39**	-.01
Control-anxiety	-.11	-.07	-.11
Control-guilt	-.45**	-.35*	-.45**
Withdrawal	-.44**	-.39**	-.34*
Negative parenting (all 8 clusters)	-.53**	-.53**	-.37*

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .005$.

Positive parenting style was also reported more than negative parenting style.

Positive parenting style was positively related to type of family system. Type of family system was inversely related to negative parenting style. Both positive and negative parenting styles were more related to cohesion than adaptability. Since cohesion is defined as “emotional bonding,” it follows that this element would be more related to positive and negative parenting styles.

Assumptions

The study assumes families, at least from the working mothers’ perspective, report a mid-range type of family system with balanced amounts of cohesion (emotional attachment) and adaptability (ability to change its interaction patterns in response to

situational or developmental stress). It is assumed that the respondents have a clear understanding of what the research tools' questions ask. Self reports of parenting behaviors are treated as accurate assessments in view of the fact these women may tend to under-estimate their parenting capabilities, or be prone to feelings of guilt.

Although Dibble and Cohen's (1974) tool is twenty three years old, it is assumed that it still accurately reflects socially acceptable (positive) and socially unacceptable (negative) parenting styles by today's standards.

Limitations

The study is limited by the relatively small sample size although the response rate of 86% for this subsample was high. The generalizability is confined to the similar demographics of the subjects.

Dibble and Cohen (1974) pose the assumption that "mom" is the implementer of behaviors necessary to accommodate the needs of the child when in fact "dad" may be orchestrator. To increase the validity of their responses, questionnaires (the same or similar tools used in this study) could possibly be completed by fathers and/or the children. The present study is limited in that only the mothers responded, and they may accurately report parenting from only one perspective.

The age of the tools employed in this study bear mention. FACES II (1989) has been updated (FACES III, 1991), however alpha reliability and validity remain higher with FACES II, now an eight year old instrument.

Congruence with conceptual framework

The results of this study support existing research on the importance of mid-range,

balanced families in terms of cohesion and adaptability and the constituents of positive and negative parenting. This research strengthens the argument for the conceptual framework based on Steinhauer (1983) which identifies the interdependence of society, the family as a unit (type of family system) and individual family members, particularly, the working professional mother as the maternal subsystem. This employed mother is a mixture of past and present history resulting in her unique parenting style.

According to Elkind (1994), postmodern children are often left without the “social envelope” of security and protection that shielded earlier generations. Regarding a particular individual parenting behavior cluster, the fond parental response of earlier generations, “Because I said so!,” (authoritarian rule) is no longer in vogue. “Control through positive discipline,” the most prominent individual parenting behavior in this study, allows children to equip themselves in a society that emphasizes self-reliance, self-realization and self-determination.

Implications for APN

Most obviously, FACES II (Olson, 1989) and Parents’ Report (Dibble & Cohen, 1974) have implications for identifying strong and weak areas for a particular parent and/or for a particular family in terms of improving family life. The APN could administer FACES II to all family members and Parents’ Report to parents and other significant parenting figures in order to assess family function and parenting style, thereby facilitating communication between parents and children/young adults. Reflection alone may be helpful. Families may wish to temper their levels of cohesion or adaptability based on levels which exceed the mid-range. Families with low levels of cohesion and adaptability

can seek out ways to enhance levels to the point of mid-range. Ways to enhance levels may best be achieved by reflecting on answers to the individual questions. Responses reporting “almost never” to “once in a while” would perhaps be more important to assess for those behaviors which are desirable at levels “always” or “almost always.”

The assessment tools are particularly suited for administration in a primary care setting in that results can be used for health promotion and prevention as well as treatment, or at least direction, for treating an already existing family dysfunction or parenting difficulty. There is no cost for administration and tools may be utilized as a “homework” assignment given office/clinic time limitations.

This research can give reassurance to the working professional mothers involved in this study that they are doing a “good” job, as well as put to rest society’s fear that children today lack parental direction, or that the majority of postmodern families are imbalanced. The APN as client advocate needs to communicate and positively reinforce positive parenting behaviors observed or related to her/him. As well, the APN must reassure mothers that no one can be the perfect parent or have the perfect family.

In this era of self-care and with APN guidance, families can discover effective and unique ways to enhance family relations in terms of cohesion and adaptability. The APN as consultant can help identify strengths, barriers, needs and competencies within families. As facilitator, the APN can help set short and long term goals, promote a climate supportive for change, and assist with steps for change in family relations. The APN might encourage regular family meetings without her/his presence as a way of family members communicating their goals, individually and as a family.

The APN as educator and client advocate, can coordinate groups for teens and parents to explore together ways in which parent-child relations can be enhanced through the use of these tools. Videos exemplifying positive parenting style could be developed and distributed through parent education classes. As evaluator, the APN in primary care can help mothers identify what is and what isn't effective in terms of parenting, and give voice to perceived susceptibility to already identifiable at-risk situations. .

The current era of self-help requires many publications for self-study, not only for the APN in practice, but also for the average parent in terms of comprehension and client responsibility. Available in May, 1997 is The intentional family: How to build family ties in our modern world which claims to demonstrate ways to "fight entropy" and "take charge of family life." Also newly released is Making families work and what to do when they don't, touted as a self-help publication which identifies myths, faulty professional advice, cultural expectations and irrational thinking that result in parents' ineffectual child rearing. Having these books available in the waiting room as well as providing a recommended parenting/family function booklist would provide further direction for parents.

Lansing heralds a new quarterly publication in April, 1997, Mid-Michigan family magazine. Editor K. Farrell views families as important and sees the magazine's purpose as doing something that will help bring families together (Douglas, 1997). Local APNs in family practice (and graduate students completing research on family function) should consider sharing their findings with the general public via such publications as well as making such publications readily available to their clients. Perhaps a monthly feature

could spotlight an example of a mid-range family and positive parenting encountered in the APN's practice.

As a final step in this study, the author will submit a copy of the thesis to Olson (1989) per request to add to the meta-analysis of type of family system research.

Future research

Olson (1989) posits that cohesion and adaptability are the sole determinants of mid-range balance function. Further research is needed to substantiate these determinants or introduce other suitable factors contributing to family balance.

One of the remaining unanswered questions is: "What do children and parents want/need?" Do children want to see parents as powerful, authoritarian figures? Do parents prefer children to remain independent? How can parents judge where to draw the line and decide how much involvement, time-wise and discipline-wise, to give children? Development of a self-report measure for teens, in particular, to record desire for control over various family and individual functions may help families to more fully understand their type of family system. Discussing teen responses with teen and parent may possibly help them understand their type of family system.

Further research should be aimed at methods as to how one enhances cohesion and adaptability in families. Should limits be placed on amounts of time spent in front of the t.v.? Should family meals together be "required," and if so what are the criteria? How can children deal with societal pressures from peers, and parents?

Perhaps the most crucial question to be addressed by the APN as change agent is, what are the child outcomes we, as a society, wish? Are there any characteristics which

we can agree on? Perhaps arrival at the general can be possible by attention to the specific. One might also consider, either through self-analysis or with guidance of the APN, whether a parent is more focused on family type (cohesion and adaptability of all family members) or parenting style (positive or negative), or a little of both. This focus may be determined by examining individual parenting behavior clusters for strength of correlation with cohesion, adaptability and the positive or negative parenting style. A future direction for research would be to examine family-focused (adapting to needs of all family members equally) and child-focused families (“child centeredness”) and decide what is the balance.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this current study has helped define the family in terms of cohesion, adaptability and parenting style. Parenting moments are only one of many in a series of events that either promote, defer or prohibit family overall mid-range function. With children, these moments contribute to their well-being or the opposite-- the development of detrimental attitudes and poor social integration. In a democratic society, it is the job of everyone to continually clarify the approaches which lead to effective parenting, reinforcing these behaviors among ourselves, parents and children.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FACES II: Family Version
David Olson, Joyce Portner and Richard Bell

1	2	3	4	5
Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always

Describe your family:

- ☐ 1. Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times.
- ☐ 2. In our family, it is easy for everyone to express his/her opinion.
- ☐ 3. It is easier to discuss problems with people outside the family than with other family members.
- ☐ 4. Each family member has input regarding major family decisions.
- ☐ 5. Our family gathers together in the same room.
- ☐ 6. Children have a say in their discipline.
- ☐ 7. Our family does things together.
- ☐ 8. Family members discuss problems and feel good about the solutions.
- ☐ 9. In our family, everyone goes his/her own way.
- ☐ 10. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.
- ☐ 11. Family members know each other's close friends.
- ☐ 12. It is hard to know what the rules are in our family.
- ☐ 13. Family members consult other family members on personal decisions.
- ☐ 14. Family members say what they want.
- ☐ 15. We have difficulty thinking of things to do as a family.
- ☐ 16. In solving problems, the children's suggestions are followed.
- ☐ 17. Family members feel very close to each other.
- ☐ 18. Discipline is fair in our family.
- ☐ 19. Family members feel closer to people outside the family than to other family members.
- ☐ 20. Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems.
- ☐ 21. Family members go along with what the family decides to do.
- ☐ 22. In our family, everyone shares responsibility.
- ☐ 23. Family members like to spend their free time with each other.
- ☐ 24. It is difficult to get a rule changed in our family.
- ☐ 25. Family members avoid each other at home.
- ☐ 26. When problems arise, we compromise.
- ☐ 27. We approve of each other's friends.
- ☐ 28. Family members are afraid to say what is on their minds.
- ☐ 29. Family members pair up rather than do things as a total family.
- ☐ 30. Family members share interests and hobbies with each other.

APPENDIX B

Negative or Socially Undesirable Variables	Behaviorally Descriptive Items
Detachment	25. I forget things he/she has told me. 26. I prefer going places and doing things without him/her. 27. I am unaware of what he/she thinks or feels.
Intrusiveness	28. I ask others what he/she does while he/she is away from me. 29. I check on what he/she is doing and whom he/she is seeing all during the day. 30. I get angry about the little things he/she does.
Lax enforcement of discipline	31. I ignore misbehavior. 32. I allow things to be left undone. 33. I let myself be talked out of things.
Inconsistent enforcement of discipline	34. I forget rules that have been made. 35. I enforce rules depending upon my mood. 36. I change rules.
Control through anxiety	37. I warn him/her about future punishments to prevent him/her from acting badly. 38. I keep reminding him/her of past behavior. 39. I tell him/her that I worry about how he/she will turn out because of his/her bad behavior.
Control through guilt	40. I let him/her know that I feel hurt if he/she does not do what he/she is told. 41. I let him/her know all I have done for him/her when I want him/her to obey. 42. I let him/her know that if he/she really cared, he/she wouldn't do things to cause me to worry.
Control through hostility	43. I speak in a strong way in order to teach him/her how to behave. 44. I use physical punishment. 45. I lose my temper when he/she does not do as I ask.
Withdrawal of relationship	46. I avoid talking to him/her when I am disappointed in him/her. 47. I avoid looking at him/her when I am disappointed in him/her. 48. I withdraw from being with my child when he/she displeases me.

APPENDIX C

**MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY**

October 16, 1996

TO: Susan A. Robinson
407 Park Meadows
Lansing, MI 48917

RE: IRB#: 96-624
TITLE: TYPE OF FAMILY SYSTEM AND PARENTING STYLE OF
WORKING PROFESSIONAL MOTHERS
REVISION REQUESTED: N/A
CATEGORY: 1-C
APPROVAL DATE: 10/16/96

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete. I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the UCRIHS approved this project and any revisions listed above.

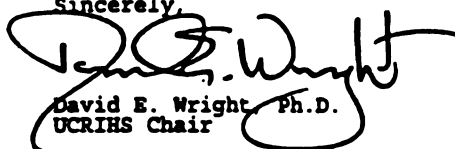
RENEWAL: UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval date shown above. Investigators planning to continue a project beyond one year must use the green renewal form (enclosed with the original approval letter or when a project is renewed) to seek updated certification. There is a maximum of four such expedited renewals possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for complete review.

REVISIONS: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the green renewal form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB # and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.

**PROBLEMS/
CHANGES:** Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, investigators must notify UCRIHS promptly: (1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or (2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to contact us at (517)355-2180 or FAX (517)432-1171.

Sincerely,


David E. Wright, Ph.D.
UCRIHS Chair

DEW:bed

cc: Linda Beth Tiedje

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

*Family Social Science
College of Human Ecology*

*290 McNeal Hall
1985 Buford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108
612-625-7250
Fax: 612-625-4227*

PERMISSION TO USE FAMILY INVENTORIES

I am pleased to give you permission to use the instruments included in Family Inventories. You have my permission to duplicate these materials for your clinical work, teaching, or research project. You can either duplicate the materials directly from the manual or have them retyped for use in a new format. If they are retyped, acknowledgements should be given regarding the name of the instrument, developers' names, and the University of Minnesota.

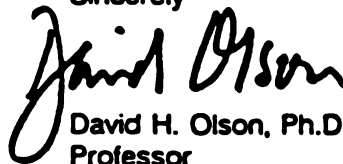
If you are planning to use FILE, A-FILE, and F-COPES, you need to obtain separate permission from Dr. Hamilton McCubbin. His address is 1300 Linden Drive, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706.

Separate permission is also required to use the ENRICH inventory in either clinical work or research. This is because the inventory is computer scored and is distributed through the PREPARE/ENRICH office. Contact Dr. David Olson at PREPARE/ENRICH, P.O. Box 190, Minneapolis, MN 55458.

In exchange for providing this permission, we would appreciate a copy of any papers, thesis, or reports that you complete using these inventories. This will help us in staying abreast of the most recent development and research with these scales. Thank you for your cooperation.

In closing, I hope you find the Family Inventories of value in your work with couples and families. I would appreciate feedback regarding how these instruments are used and how well they are working for you.

Sincerely


David H. Olson, Ph.D.
Professor

*FAMILY INVENTORIES PROJECT (FIP)
Director: David H. Olson, Ph.D.*

APPENDIX E

October 12, 1996

Dear Role Conflict Correspondent:

I am a graduate nursing student working with Linda Beth Tiedje and am studying for my masters in nursing/family nurse practitioner. From a personal stance, I am a "breadwinner" in a dual career family (working, and now going to school) and a mother of two school-age children, certainly grounds for role conflict!

My masters thesis is concerned with family function and parenting styles of working professional women. You are one of 54 respondents specially selected from the Summer 1996 questionnaire of the role conflict study who mentioned children in their recent major life changes/events. The questionnaire I am mailing can be completed within 20-30 minutes. The data will be used for my master's thesis and will contribute to family nursing research in the primary care setting. All information will be kept completely confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any particular question.

Please return the enclosed questionnaire by November 1, 1996. We will award the first ten respondents Ties that stress by David Elkind. The book has personally and professionally given me new insights into family living. If you have any questions, the contact person is Sue Robinson, (517)-321-5295.

Please know how very much we appreciate your cooperation!

Sincerely,

Sue Robinson, R.N., B.S.N.

**UCRIHS APPROVAL FOR
THIS project EXPIRES:**

OCT 16 1997

**SUBMIT RENEWAL APPLICATION
ONE MONTH PRIOR TO
ABOVE DATE TO CONTINUE**

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