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Children Among Military Families In Taiwan

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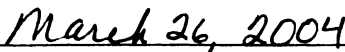
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LEARNED OPTIMISM AS A BUFFER OF PARENT STRESS WITH YOUNG  
CHILDREN AMONG MILITARY FAMILIES IN TAIWAN

By

Hsiu-Shuo Hu

A THESIS

Submitted to  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **LEARNED OPTIMISM AS A BUFFER OF PARENT STRESS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AMONG MILITARY FAMILIES IN TAIWAN**

By

Hsiu-Shuo Hu

The purpose of this study is to identify factors (father absence, parent-child dysfunctional interaction, and marital relationship) in the family subsystem and individual factors (coping skills and learned optimism) that may be related to parent stress with young children among military families in Taiwan. One hundred mothers with children between birth to twelve years from military families were included in the sample. The results of the study indicated that learned optimism served as a buffer on parent-child dysfunctional interaction, which may further influence parent stress. Marital relationship was significantly related to parent stress. Additional analyses showed a positive relationship between mother's education, family income and parent stress.

To God  
To my family

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# **Chapter 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Being a parent is a challenging "job" because it involves multi-level demands, such as physical, emotional, intellectual, and psychological adaptations to establish a well-functioning family. It is noted that the transition from single or married couple to parenthood dramatically affects persons who perceive themselves in the roles of parents, and can lead to parent stress (Mebert, 1991; Roosa, 1988,). From an ecological perspective, there are reciprocal influences inside the family involving parents and child that impact the whole family. Therefore, the stressors of parent stress may include child, parents, and environmental characteristics. Examining the effects of different types of stressors in parenting that may be associated with parent stress has become imperative to the family well-being (Abidin, 1992; Webster-Stratton, 1990).

In Chinese society, due to the influence of Confucianism, parents put a high value on being aware of their parent roles (Chao, 1994; Ho, 1981; Coll, et al., 1995). The parenting role is viewed as being mainly a teacher (Kelly & Tseng, 1992); therefore, the Chinese value "Cha chiao" ("family

education" in Chinese) as the core theme of parent-child interaction (Chen & Luster, 2002). If a child misbehaves or shows bad manners, it is viewed as a reflection of poor "cha chiao". In the Chinese cultural setting, parents are often the ones to be criticized for not being able to teach their child proper social behavior. Not surprisingly, parent stress in Taiwan is often excessive and different to their counterparts.

Apparently, the parental role poses unique challenges among military families. Military families confront frequent father absences, are geographically separated from their families of origin and civilian peers, and often lack physical access to their hometown social supports and parental models. These common challenges for military families are not usually seen in many traditional nuclear families. Duties first and family second have been the predominant attitude (Darnauer, 1976). Consequently, the mother and children must learn to be more independent as the father is intermittently away from the home and the family. They have to adjust to the separation and cope with daily life stressors. However, when the father returns from duty, his reintegration into the family inevitably impacts

the mother-child dyads. The family ecosystem of a two-parent family and that of a one-parent family swings like a pendulum back and forth. The pendulum- like relationships between parents and children account for frequent readjustments which can lead to conflict in parent-child interactions or marital relationships. This conflict is especially found in military families because of its distinctive characteristics in terms of father absences due to the obligation of duty. Therefore, it can be predicted that parents experience higher levels of stress in military families as compared to other non-military families.

Previous research indicated that optimism and explanatory style are related to a variety of psychological, behavioral, and physical outcomes (Gillham, et al., 2001). No research has attempted to examine the relationship between learned optimism and parent stress. It would be worth to studying whether learned optimism acts as a buffer against the stressors of parent stress under the conditions of father's frequent absences, marital conflict, and child rearing demanding. Although researchers emphasized the importance of social support as a buffer of parental stress (Greenberger, & O'Neil, 1993), restrictions imposed by the

parental role can increase social isolation. Learned optimism means a person's explanatory style is always toward positive expectations for the future. Therefore, learned optimism can serve as a drive toward successful adaptation which increases the family strengths to overcome the odds. Optimists tend to use a variety of emotion-focused coping responses, including the tendency to accept the reality of the situations, to put the situation in the best possible light, and to grow personally from their hardships (Carver, et al., 1998). Stress can't be removed, but can be reduced. The military family experiences more stress than its counterpart in terms of father's absence, but it remains manageable as long as both spouses can cope with it positively. It may be that optimism plays an extremely important role in helping military parents and children to cope with stress. It is estimated there are 100,000 to 110,000 military personnel in Taiwan. Overall, 60,000 military personnel have families, and 45,000 to 50,000 have children from 0 to 12 years of age. Little research has been conducted concerning the issues of parent stress among military families in Taiwan. Hence, it is crucial to undertake this study to identify the stressors of military



families with young children in Taiwan.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study is to identify factors of parent stress with young children that may be buffered by learned optimism in Taiwan military families. Specifically, this study will investigate the relationships of socioeconomic status (SES), parent-child dysfunctional interactions, and the mother's/wife's coping behaviors and the mother's psychological resources associated with parents' learned optimism.

### **Main Research Questions**

In order to accomplish these objectives, there are two major research questions that will be addressed:

1. Do military families undergo parent-child and marital stress due to the father's frequent absence?
2. In military families what are the intervening variables associated with parent-child and marital stress?

## **Research Objectives**

The overall purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship of the military family's characteristics associated with parent stress and relationship between the intervening variable-learned optimism and parent stress. In order to reach this goal, several more specific objectives were developed to guide this study:

1. To investigate the relationship between learned optimism and parent stress.
2. To investigate the relationship between parent stress and the father's absence.
3. To investigate the relationship between marital relationship and parent stress.
4. To investigate the relationship between parent-child dysfunctional interaction and parent stress.
5. To investigate the relationship between the mother's coping skills and parent stress.
6. To investigate the relationship between the family's socioeconomic status and parent stress.
7. To investigate the relationship between parents' education and parent stress.

8. To investigate the relationship between family income and parent stress.
9. To investigate the relationship between parents' occupational status and parent stress.

### **Significance of the Study**

The distinctive military family stressors that lead to parent stress deserve our attention. According to literature, learned optimism can exist in everyone's mind. If so, learned optimism may influence the resilience of families. Understanding the stresses that affect parents of young children is an important part of efforts aimed at early identification and intervention (Abidin & Burke , 1992) . Researchers indicate that the field of family therapy has refocused attention from family deficits to family strengths (Nichols & Schwartz, 2000). This study has practical importance for making and influencing policies concerning military families and children in Taiwan. The results of this study can be used to highlight policies regarding information about the role of family factors in influencing parent stress and its effects on the

parent-child relationship. Military parent education programs could also be guided by the results of this study. Moreover, the findings found from this study could also add to the body of existing literature about learned optimism and whether it can buffer parent stress in the family.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Family Ecosystem Theory**

The family ecosystem of human ecosystem by Bubolz and Sontag (1993) is used as the model for this study. They proposed that a family ecosystem consists of a given family system in interaction with its environments, which including the natural physical-biological; the social cultural environment; and the human-built environment (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). The environments are embedded within each other as indicated in Figure 1. Therefore, the family as a system is interdependent, and interrelated, and interacts with the whole environments. Because boundaries may be fluid, both the boundaries and the size of the family ecosystem may change due to changing involvement of family members within both the family and the community over space

and time. In family ecology, it is important to be sensitive to the way in which families define themselves and to boundary ambiguity, which is defined as uncertainty about who is the family (Boss, 1987).

The natural physical-biological environment includes physical and biological components (e.g., atmosphere, climate, soil, water, minerals, plants, and animals), as they exist unaltered in nature. The human-built environment includes alterations and transformations made by humans of the natural physical-biological environment (e.g., roads, cultivated land, urban settlements, material artifacts, and polluted air and water) for survival, sustenance, and the attainment of other ends. The social-cultural environment includes (1) the presence of other human beings (e.g., neighbors who organize community action groups), (2) abstract cultural constructions (e.g., language, laws, norms, and cultural values and patterns), and (3) social and economic institutions (e.g., the social-regulatory system, agricultural-industrial system, and market economy (Koenig et al., 1975 as cited in Bubolz & Sontag, 1993)).

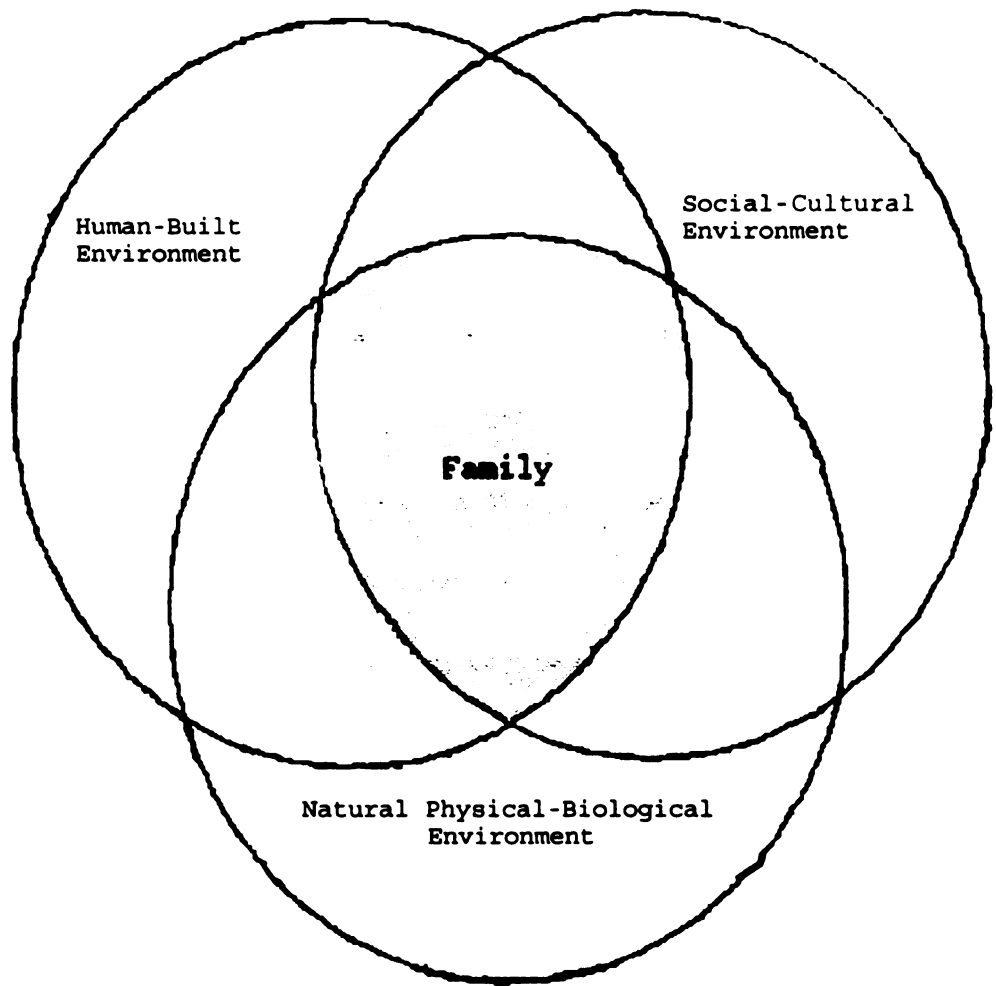
In the family ecosystem, the family is seen as the fundamental human system made up of different subsystems.

It is also understood that family members are joined in a network of pathways over materials, information, and other forms of potential energy, in interaction with their environment (Griffore & Phenice, 2001). A traditional family consists of married couples and biological or non-biological children. From an ecosystem perspective, family members are the organisms of interest who dynamically interact with their environment to the extent of influencing each other. However, family ecosystems are dynamic, purposive organizations; they have preferred states, goals, and outcomes (Paloucci, 1977). They can change values, goals, and rules in response to internal or environmental changes (Bubloz & Sontag, 1993). Obviously, the human adaptation in the family ecosystem is required to maintain the interaction within each subsystem.

It is believed that well-functioning families can provide children an optimal environment to live in, not only with what they require for material well-being and security but also with care-giving, involving emotional intimacy and moral training that they require to grow up as adults. When studying family ecosystems, we should focus on not only family members but also environments. It will allow us to

better understand problems and reach for the solutions because it forces one to view each part of the ecosystem and the relationships among them. Families differ in their ability to adjust to the risk situations. However, as Paloucci (1977) pointed out, the more complex an ecosystem, the more successfully it can survive and resist stress. Consequently, for all members' benefit, the family needs to be capable to maintain equilibrium.

Family ecological theory is very useful in describing and explaining interactions within the family as well as transactions with the environment. Bubloz and Sontag's (1993) model provides the basis for understanding the interaction within and between the family and its environments (see Figure 1). This research investigated the interaction within the family ecosystem in affecting parent stress. The major independent variables are parent-child dysfunction interaction, mother's coping skills, father's absence, and marital relationship, and parent's socioeconomic status. The dependent variable is parent stress. It is hypothesized that the intervening variable is learned optimism.



**Figure 1. Family Ecosystem**



## **Research Hypotheses**

Based on the research objectives, the following research hypotheses will be tested in this study.

**Ho 1:** There is no difference between mothers who have higher education levels and mothers who have lower education levels on parent stress.

**Ha 1:** There is a difference between mothers who have higher education levels and mothers who have lower education levels on parent stress.

**Ho 2:** Father absence will not be associated to parent stress.

**Ha 2:** Father absence will be associated to parent stress.

**Ho 3:** There is no relationship between supportive parent-child interaction and parent stress level.

**Ha 3:** There is a relationship between supportive parent-child interaction and parent stress level.

**Ho 4:** Parents who have a satisfied marital relationship will have the same level of parent stress as parents who have a dissatisfied marital relationship.

**Ha 4:** Parents who have a satisfied marital relationship will have less level of parent stress than parents who have a dissatisfied marital relationship.

**Ho 5:** Father absence will not be related to satisfied marital

relationship.

**Ha 5:** Father absence will be related to satisfied marital relationship.

**Ho 6:** Mother/wife who has higher coping skill score will report no difference on reducing total parenting stress score (PSI-SF).

**Ha 6:** Mother/wife who has higher coping skill score will report a difference on reducing total parenting stress score (PSI-SF).

**Ho 7:** There is no relationship between parent's optimism score (ASQ) and parent stress as measured by PSI-SF.

**Ha 7:** There is a relationship between parent's optimism score (ASQ) and parent stress as measured by PSI-SF.

**Ho 8:** There is no difference between parents with higher or lower learned optimism scores (ASQ) with regard to parent-child interaction.

**Ha 8:** There is a difference between parents with higher or lower learned optimism scores (ASQ) with regard to parent-child interaction.

**Ho 9:** There is no difference between parents with higher or lower learned optimism scores (ASQ) on marital relationship.

**Ha 9:** There is a difference between parents with higher or lower learned optimism scores (ASQ) on marital relationship.

### **Conceptual and Operational Definitions**

The following definitions are used in this study.

#### **Parent Stress**

**Conceptual:** Parent stress refers to the parent's subjective perception of being competent as a parent.

**Operational:** Parent stress will be measured by responding to the Parenting Stress Index Short Form (PSI/SF) instrument (Abidin, R. 1990).

#### **Learned Optimism**

**Conceptual:** Learned optimism refers to the respondents' explanatory style to bad events with external, unstable, and specific causes that affect them in daily life.

**Operational:** Learned optimism will be measured by responding the "Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ)" (Peterson, et al., 1982).

#### **Father Absence**

**Conceptual:** Father absence refers to the father's physical

absence from home.

**Operational:** Father absence will be measured by the mother scoring on the item-length of husband's absence per month in the Family Background Information (Item No.1)

### **Parent-Child Interaction**

**Conceptual:** Parent-child interaction refers to the respondent's observational interaction on daily events.

**Operational:** Parent-child interaction will be measured by one domain of Parenting Stress Index Short-Form (PSI/SF) instrument (Abidin, 1990).

### **Coping Skills**

**Conceptual:** Mother coping skills refer to mother's/wife's universal coping behaviors response to family stress.

**Operational:** Mother coping skills scores will be measured by Family Coping Inventory (FCI) (McCubbin, et al., 1991).

### **Marital Relationship**

**Conceptual:** Marital relationship refers to the respondent's subjective feeling of their relationship with the spouse.

**Operational:** Marital relationship results from spouse's response on separation from husband will be measured by Family Background Information (Items No.12, 13, 14, 15).

## **Research Propositions**

Proposition 1: This research will assume that father's absence leads to increased parent stress in military family.

Proposition 2: This research will assume that a parent with young children will experience certain stress in a military family.

Proposition 3: This research will assume that learned optimism could mediate the parent stress.

Proposition 4: This research will assume the mother's coping skills can impact her stress level during father's absence

Proposition 5: This research will assume some level of measurable optimism is present in all families.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Parent Stress with Young Children

In all eras and across cultures, parents have been educated in a general sense to fulfill their parental roles (Harmin & Brim, 1980). However, research literature associates parent stress as a major factor influencing parenting behavior and as a determinant of dysfunctional parenting (Abidin, 1992; Belsky, 1984). Ideally, for the child's well-being, father and mother as parents should cooperate in parenting children. The parental role is an everyday behavior that occurs within the family, influencing and being influenced by other family roles (Menaghan, 1982). The more a parent feels competent and self-confident, the more the parent will make redundant satisfactory personal adjustments to parenthood and be comfortable in the role. However, in military families, mothers were expected to take the major responsibility of childrearing and housekeeping. This expectation will impact the mothers' perceived competence in parenting. Lundberg,

Mardberg, and Frankenhaeuser (1994) concluded that having the main responsibility for various household chores was likely to cause additional stress in women.

Stressors perceived by parents could be diverse. A number of empirical studies have linked greater parenting stress to problems in parent and family functioning, including less optimal parent-child interaction, a difficult child, and perceived negative marital quality (Lavee, et al., 1996). All have been associated with high degrees of parenting stress that influence parents in fulfilling their parental role. Stress in the parenting system during the first 3 years of life is especially critical in relation to the child's emotional/behavioral development and to the parent/child relationships (Abidin, 1992). Consequently, to examine the relations among stressors and the effects of different types of stressors impacting parent stress can help us to develop a comprehensive model and shift from the problems to solutions.

### **Family Factors Influencing Parent Stress**

#### **Father's Absence**

Intermittent father's absence is another factor that affects parent stress within military families. When a parent is absent from the home, the presence of other caring adults (mothers) in the child's life becomes more critical; however they must receive support to properly fulfill their roles. It has been reported that children living without a father usually suffer some disadvantages, such as "receive less supervision and protection", "lack of a role model both for sons and daughters". Adjusting to wartime assignments, unaccompanied tours, and repeated temporary duty assignments are likely to have a profound effect on family members (Hamner, & Turner, 1990, p.255). Over the decades, researchers have focused on negative outcomes of father's absence both on the family and on the child's development. For the family, father absence accounts for these possible consequences: loss of economic resources, loss of parental resources and loss of community resources (Malanahan & Teitler, 1999). For the child itself, the consequences could be dropping out of school, conduct problems, running away from home, juvenile delinquency, and low academic achievement. However, these outcomes are not inevitable. As Malanahan and Teitler (1999) indicated, in spite of the



consistency of negative association with father absence, these findings are not based on experimental data. They admitted that the correlation between a father's absence and child well-being result in some other variables unobserved by research, possibly such as parent's psychological functioning or children with altruism. In addition, the effect size and probabilistic nature also reveal that not all children raised in father-absent households do worse than children in two-parent families. Although the father cannot be always at home, he can use indirect discipline and emotional support to his children more than conventional parents. In many such cases, effective parenting will not diminish. Studies indicate that the military family values the development of independence, consideration, obedience, respect and neatness.

Mothers in military families are likely to function differently when fathers are present than when they are away on military assignments. Consequently, mothers need to adapt and adjust effectively in this situation. However, when the father returns he must be reintegrated into the family. This process takes time and produces stress (Hamner

& Turner, 1990). She may see the children as a source of support and comfort, or as restricting her participation in the outside world (McCubbin et al., 1976)

### **Parent-Child Interactions**

From an ecological perspective, the military family structure is made up of intermittent father absence. Under this circumstance, mother is indicated as the most influential parent. Therefore, the mother's influence on how the family function is the crucial element for the well being of the child. Quality parent-child interactions account for good child developmental outcomes; on the other hand, to obtain quality parent-child interaction can be a factor of parent stress. The interaction between parent and child is reciprocal in character: parent affects child behavior and child behavior influences parental behavior.

Many studies point out that babies identified as difficult had less responsive care-giving and stimulation from their mothers in infancy. In essence, difficult babies are more likely to receive suboptimal maternal care (Mangelsdorf, et al., 1990). Researchers recently found significant negative relations between parenting stress and the quality of mother's interactions with their school-age

children (Teti, et al., 1991). Children with difficult temperament and other problems tax the functioning of parents by fostering parental negativity (Anderson, et al., 1986; Stevenson- Hinde & Simpson, 1982; Webster-Stratton, 1990). Child characteristics may also affect the mother's stress level. Parenting may be less stressful for a woman who has a baby with a pleasant and easy disposition than for a woman who has a difficult baby. (Gelfand, et al., 1992)

It is noted that mothers of temperamentally difficult infants reported greater stress. Moreover, heightened parent stress has been found among parents of difficult-to-manage hyperactive children (Mash & Johnston, 1990).

### **Marital Relationship**

Researchers suggest that parents who are satisfied within supportive marital relations will be more available to respond sensitively to the needs of their child (Easterbrooks & Emde, 1988). A marital relationship involves a great change during the transition to parenthood when the couples are facing having a newborn. Positive affection interaction decreases, but conflict increases (Veroff, et al., 2000). Children not only require extensive attention, but often they also create disequilibrium within

a couple, as spouses learn to balance new responsibilities and attempt to maintain old ones (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). A finding replicated by Gable, Belsky, and Crinic (1995) pointed out that for most couples, however, significant declines in negativity began about the first year after the child's birth.

It is evident that the transition from marital couple to parenthood widens already-existing differences between husband and wife, and is associated with the onset of new types of stressors (Mercer & Ferketich, 1990). Longitudinal studies of low-risk couples make it clear that stress and distress in parents during the early years of family formation are associated with negative development outcomes for their child in the preschool and elementary school periods (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). Research indicates that parents' psychological adaptation before their babies are born can predict their parenting effectiveness during the first year or two of the child's life. Furthermore, Erel & Burman (1995) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the association between the marital relationship and parent-child relationship. The results showed that the link between marital and parent-child relationship functions as

a more stable force than previously thought.

## **Individual Factors That Influence Parent Stress**

### **Coping Skills**

Coping is a stabilizing factor that can help individuals sustain psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods; it encompasses cognitive and behavioral efforts to reduce or eliminate stressful conditions and associated emotional distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Moos & Schaefer, 1993). It is particularly crucial in military families that mothers have good coping skills, for they encounter tough situations due to the intermittent father's absence. According to researchers' findings, a psychologically healthy mother can counter the effects of transient father absence (Jensen et al., 1989). The approach of using coping strategies, such as problem solving and seeking information, can moderate the potential adverse influence of both negative life changes and role stressors on psychological functioning (Billings & Moos, 1981). Parental functioning is influenced by a variety of factors (e.g. personal psychological resources of parents, characteristics of the child, and

contextual sources of stress and support); however, personal psychological resources of parents are the only determinants that can remain intact in case the others are not sustainable (Belsky, 1984). It is also well addressed that coping strategies involving negotiation and optimistic comparisons have been linked to reductions in concurrent distress and to fewer role problems (Menaghan, 1982).

### **Learned Optimism and Its Explanatory Style**

It has been found that adults who are psychologically healthy and mature are more likely to provide the kind of care that promotes healthy psychological development in their children (Belsky, 1990). Optimism is the characteristic that people perceive bad or unfortunate events as external and temporary forces. This characteristic determines how the subjects interpret and explain whatever happens to them. Ultimately, optimism will affect the outcomes, including intra-personal relationships, successful parenting, and physical health. Contemporary clinical psychology began to shift its century-old focus on a negative aspect of human nature-pathology to a more appreciative perspective in a new frontier-positive psychology (Kogan, 2001; Sheldon &

King, 2001). Accordingly, human potential, motives, and capacities are emphasized to attain to good outcomes. Prior to the growing interest in positive attitude, emotions and beliefs, optimism was defined by Scheier and Carver as generalized expectancy for positive outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1992).

Explanatory style is a cognitive personality variable that reflects how a person habitually explains the causes of bad events (Peterson & Seligman, 1984). Regarded as an explanatory style, optimism is conceptualized as a stable cognitive set reflecting general, rather than specific outcome expectancies, and is a general trait or outlook that includes a person's overall attitude and approach toward self and world (Myers, 1992; Seligman, 1991). The resolution of the explanatory style literature and the risk perception literature may entail the recognition that optimistic explanatory style is a special sort of optimism, one infused with urgency (McKenna, 1993). Therefore, an optimistic explanatory style is not to be confused with the blithe exception of a rosy tomorrow. Instead, an optimistic explanatory style leads one to expect a better world by enhancing his or her personal control. Optimists experience

life differently than do pessimists. Optimistic people expect good things to happen to them; whereas pessimistic people expect bad things to happen. Due to the different anticipation, they may even act in ways that ultimately help create the very outcomes they anticipate.

### **Summary**

Within family as a natural social system, individuals are tied to one another by powerful, durable, reciprocal emotional attachments and loyalties that may fluctuate in intensity over time, but nevertheless persist over the lifetime of the family (Goldenberg, 1990). A lot of data from studies that follow couples beyond the immediate transition to parenthood highlight the necessity of taking a family- systems view of what happens to development when partners become parents. Presumably, the mothers' explanatory style and psychological adaptive function become the determinant of successful coping skills that buffer parent stress, and ultimately influence parents' perception of themselves as good parents in military families.



## **Chapter 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This study investigates factors related to parent stress and the relationship with learned optimism. The study is a cross-sectional and correlational design. The units of analysis in this study are the mothers with young children under age twelve among military families.

#### **Research Sample**

The sample consists of one hundred mothers with young children under twelve years old in Taiwan military families. The investigator contacted the supervisor of the military resources center and explained the purpose of the study. Then the investigator sent a consent form, along with a descriptive letter to one hundred and fifty families with children under twelve years old. Then the investigator mailed the questionnaires along with consent forms and postage-paid return envelopes to the families. The sample

included families from a wide range of socioeconomic classes. All mothers who gave consent to participate were selected to do further data analysis.

### **Research Instruments**

The dependent variable, parent stress, was measured by using "Parenting Stress Index- Short Form (PSI-SF)" by Richard Abidin (1990). The Likert-scale PSI-SF measurement device is designed to assess stress results in the mother/child system. Respondents with high raw scores above 90 are considered to experience significant levels of stress. The assumption is that the mother is typically the keystone of the family system and will be most knowledgeable about and most reflective of the pressures and stresses present in the entire parent/child system. The intervening variable, learned optimism, was measured by using the "Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ)" (Peterson, et al., 1984). The ASQ is a self-report instrument that gives scores for explanatory style for 6 hypothetical bad events and 6 hypothetical good events using three causal dimensions: internal vs. external, stable vs. unstable, and global vs.

specific causes. The respondent was asked to write down the one major cause of each event and then rate the cause along a 7-point continuum for each of three causal dimensions. High scores indicated the respondents' high learned optimism. The ASQ takes an average of about 20 minutes to complete. For the military family, this study also use "Family Coping Inventory (FCI)" by McCubbin, et al. (1991) to measure spouses' response to family stress results from permanent or repeated separation. This Likert-Scale FCI contains 70 items. FCI is designed to record the behaviors and skills wives or husbands find helpful to them in managing family life when spouses are separated for short, long, or permanent periods of time. Respondents with high scores show that the respondents have good coping skills. In addition, the researcher designed "Family Background Information" with 15 items to measure mother's perception about her marital relationship and general socioeconomic information. High scores of marital relationship indicate the respondents have satisfied marital relationships.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection began on June 1, 2003 and ended on July 31, 2003. The investigator contacted the Military Resources Center and reported the purpose of study to personnel who is responsible for military information to get the military family lists. Then the questionnaires and postage-paid envelopes along with consent forms were sent to the respondents. The investigator was the only person collecting data.

### **Data Analyses**

Data were coded by the investigator. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-11.5). Descriptive statistics were used to determine the basic distributional characteristics of each of the variables. To examine the relations between the variables of interest, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients, one-way ANOVA, and regression analysis were conducted. Additional supplemental analyses including t-tests were conducted. A chance probability level of less than .05 was set to reject the null hypotheses. All tests

were two-tailed.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The required documentation was submitted for review by the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) at Michigan State University. Approval was granted by UCRIHS prior to selection of people for the study (Appendix A). A consent form (Appendix B) was provided to each mother to ensure that she understood the study, that there are no inherent risks to either to her or her husband/child, and that her participation was voluntary. It was made clear that the mother had the option of discontinuing her participation at any time. All the sampled families were informed that all the information they provided would be treated as confidential.

## **Chapter 4**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

Demographic characteristics of the sample were obtained by the Family Background Information which was administered to mothers whose children were in the sample. A summary of the samples characteristics is presented in Table 1. The data collected through this instrument provided information about the mother's age, education, employment, occupation, father's absence, income of the family, and child's age.

It is estimated there are 1,000,000 to 1,100,000 military personnel in Taiwan. Overall, 60,000 military personnel have families and with 4500 to 50,000 with children from 0 to 6 years of age. In general, the military families experience different lifestyles contrasted to other traditional families.

The total number of participants in this study was 100 mothers, all of whom received the questionnaires. The father's physical absence ranged from less than one week to three weeks per month with a mean absence of 1.17 weeks.

The age of mothers ranged from 23 years old to 52 years old with a mean age of 33.4. The average number of children per family was 1.77. In the present study 51% of the families had two children, 36% had one child and 13% had three children.

With regard to the mother's education, 49% of the mothers had completed College or university, 12% had completed partial college training, 4% had graduated from professional training, 30% had completed high school and 5% had not completed high school.

There was a wide range in the annual income of the sampled families, 14% of families ranged from \$12,501.00 to \$18,750.00, 36% of families ranged from \$18,750.00 to \$25,000.00, 22% ranged from \$25,001.00 to \$31,250.00, and 28% had more than \$31,251.00. Sixty-seven percent of mothers were employed, 46% of these employed mothers were full-time employees, while 21% were part-time employees.

Table 1  
 Characteristics of Sample Families  
 Overall Sample (N=10)

Number of Children	Average=1.77 range=1-3 S.D.=.664
Mother's Age	mean=33.4 range=23-52 S.D.=4.795
Mother's Education (number of years)	mean=13.98 range=5-22 S.D.=2.613
Father's Absence (week/month)	mean=1.17 Range= less than one week to three week S.D.=.697
Mother's Employment Status	
Not Employed	32%
Employed	67%
Full time	46%
Part-time	21%
Mother's Occupational Status	



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Unskilled worker	22%
Skilled	31%
Owner of Small Business	16%
Proprietors of medium sized business	15%
Business managers	11%
Executives and proprietors of large concern business	5%
Family Annual Income	
	14% with range \$12,501.00-\$18,7500
	36% with range \$18,751.00-\$25,000.00
	22% with range \$25,001.00-\$31,250.00
	28% more than \$ 31,251.00

### **Relations Between Several Variables and the Parent Stress**

This section presents the relations between the predictor variables and the parent stress with young children as measured by the Parenting Stress Index Short Form. Table 2 presents the correlations between the continuous

variables and the parent's stress for the overall sample.

As expected, the parent-child dysfunction interaction was significantly related to the scores of PSI/SF. Mothers who scored higher on the PSI/SF tended to perceive that their children did not meet her expectations, and the interactions with her child were not reinforcing to her as a parent. In addition, marital relationship was positively and significantly related to parent stress. It indicated that a parent who has very satisfied marital relationship will strongly disagree she is not competent as a parent. Years of mother's education and family income were also significantly related to parent stress. Mother's coping skills and mother's employment were negatively related to parent stress. As expected, it reveals that an employed mother who has poor coping skills tend to experience high parent stress. It is noteworthy that a father's periodic absence was not significantly related to the scores on the PSI/SF. However, it shows that the mean scores of father's absence less than one week were higher than those of fathers who were absent one week and three week. This result implies that military family household decision-making could be disturbed by the father's intermittent presence and

absence.

The intervening variable "learned optimism", as measured by ASQ was significantly correlated with parent stress. It indicated there is a correlation between parents with composite positive and hopeful attributional styles and parent stress.

Table 2

Zero-order Correlations: Relations between Several Variables and Parent Stress with young children.

PSI/SF Scores	
Variables	Overall Sample (N=99)
Mother's Education	.257*
Father's Absence	.046
Mother's Employed	-.075
Family Income	.293*
Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interactions	.806**
Mother's coping skills	-.173
Marital relationship	.339**
Learned optimism	.305**

Note: \*\*P<.01 \*p<.05

As can be seen in Table 3, the length of father's absence indicated no relationship to parent-child dysfunctional interaction, mother's coping skills, martial relationship,

and learned optimism. Although the correlations are not significant, it showed that the effect of father's absence from home does negatively impact the family ecosystem. Mother's learned optimism was significantly correlated to parent-child functional interaction. The data showed that mothers who had higher scores on learned optimism strongly disagreed that their parent-child interactions were dysfunctional.

Table 3  
Relations among the Variables for Overall Sample

	Mother's Education	Father's Absence	Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction	Mother's Coping Skills	Marital Relationship	Learned Optimism
Mother's Education	1.00					
Father's Absence	.041	1.00				
Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction	.293**	-.015	1.00			
Mother's Coping Skills	.000	-.036	-.144	1.00		
Marital Relationship	.096	-.042	.109	.059	1.00	
Learned Optimism	.081	.000	.376**	-.105	.159	1.00

\*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### **Differences Between Subsamples for Independent Variables on Parent Stress and Learned Optimism**

An independent t-test was run to examine the differences between subsamples for independent variable and parent stress with young children. Table 4 presents a difference between the PSI/SF scores of mothers who had a high level of education (more than 12 schooling years) and mother's who had a low level of education fewer than 12 schooling years). As can be seen from Table 4, the mean PSI/SF score for parents who have higher educated years was 109.89; for parents who have less educated years it was 116.25. The means were not significantly different.

Table 4

T-Test for differences between Two Groups of Mothers'  
Education in Parent Stress with young children

Variable	Mean (SD)		t-value	df	Prob.
	Higher educated mothers (N=63)	Less educated mothers (N=36)			
Parenting Stress Index/SF	109.88 (20.01)	116.25 19.6)	-1.538	97	.127 (NS)

Note: The NS means not significant.

A significant difference was found between mothers of high satisfaction in their marital relationship and those with low satisfaction in their marital relationship related to parent stress (see Table 5). Mothers with high satisfaction in their marital relationship had higher PSI/SF scores than mothers with low satisfied marital relationship. The mean PSI/SF for mothers who had higher satisfied marital relationship was 107.60; for mothers who had lower satisfied marital relationship it was 117.40. The significant level is .019\*

Table 5

T-Test for Differences between Two Groups of Marital  
Relationship in Parent Stress with Young Children

Variable	Mean (SD)		t-value	df	Prob.
	Higher satisfied marital relationship mothers (N=64)	Lower satisfied marital relationship mothers (N=36)			
Parenting Stress Index/SF	107.60 (21.1)	117.40 (18.6)	-2.394	97	.019*

Note: \*  $P < 0.05$ .

With regard to mothers' coping skills, the investigator ran SPSS frequency procedure to get the distribution of the sample; two groups were made according the mean. One group had higher coping skills and the other group had lower coping skills. As can be seen from Table 6, a significant difference was found. The mean PSI/SF score for mothers who had higher coping skills was 107.21; for mothers who had lower coping skills it was 117.46.

Table 6

T-Test for Differences between Two Groups of Coping  
Skills in Parent Stress with Young Children

Variable	Mean (SD)		t-value	df	Prob.
	Higher	Lower			
	coping skills (N=34)	Coping skills (N=65)			
Parenting Stress Index/SF	107.20 (21.9)	117.46 (18.0)	2.493	97	.014*

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$

An independent t-test was run to examine the difference between the mothers who scored higher learned optimism on parent-child dysfunctional interaction. A significant difference was found between the two groups in parent-child dysfunctional interaction (see Table 7). Thus, there was a difference between mothers who had higher learned optimism and mothers who had lower learned optimism in their parent-child interaction.



Table 7

T-Test for Difference between Two groups of learned optimism  
in Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction

Variable	Mean (SD)		t-value	df	Prob.
	Higher learned optimism (N=50)	Lower Learned optimism (N=49)			
Parent-child Dysfunctional interaction	39.10 (7.64)	42.70 (4.61)	-2.843	97	0.005*

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ .

No significant difference was found between mothers who had higher learned optimism and mothers with lower learned optimism with regard to marital relationship (see Table 8). Thus, higher or lower learned optimism made no difference on predicting marital relationship.

Table 8

T-Test for Difference between Two Groups of learned optimism  
on marital relationship

Variable	Mean (SD)		t-value	df	Prob.
	Higher learned optimism (N=50)	Lower learned optimism (N=49)			
Marital relationship	14.68 (4.23)	14.06 (3.6)	-.788	97	.432

One-way ANOVA for the PSI/SF was used to test the differences among the three means for the mothers from high (greater than 14 Marital Relationship scores), medium (from 12 to 14 Marital Relationship scores), and low (less than 12 Marital Relationship scores) satisfied marital relationship. The mean PSI/SF score for mothers who had high satisfied marital relationship was 106.41; for mothers from medium satisfied marital relationship it was 109.88; for mothers who had low satisfied marital relationship it was 119.10. As can be seen from Table 9, there was a difference among high, medium, and low satisfied marital relationship groups for the mean PSI/SF scores.

Table 9

One-Way ANOVA Results for Parent Stress with young children

Marital Relationship	Mean scores on PSI/SF	S.D
High Satisfied Marital Relationship	106.41	23.00
Medium Satisfied Marital Relationship	109.88	16.82
Low Satisfied Marital Relationship	119.10	19.66

Groups	Mean Squares	df	f-value	Prob.
Between	1411.76	2	3.747	.027*
Within	376.81	96		

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ 

### Multiple Predictors of Parent stress

This section presents the findings of a regression analysis that was done to determine which of the predictor variables were related to parent stress. In the analysis, all the independent variables were entered simultaneously. The results of the regression analysis for the overall sample are presented in Table 10. As can be seen in Table 10, mother's education, father's absence, mother's employment,

family annual income, parent-child dysfunctional interaction, mother's coping skills, marital relationship, and learned optimism explained 73.6 % of the variance in the scores for PSI/SF. The F Value for the model was 31.301. The analysis suggested that the independent variables, parent-child dysfunction and marital relationship were significantly related to parent stress.

Table 10

Multiple Regression Analysis: Predictors of Parent stress

PSI/SF Scores			
Predictors Variables	Betas	t-Statistic	Prob.
Father's Absence	.072	1.311	.193
Mother's Employment	.004	.059	.953
Mother's Education	-.019	-.326	.745
Family Annual Income	.104	1.661	.097
Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction	.767	12.311	.000
Coping Skills	-.085	-1.542	.127
Marital Relationship	.253	4.426	.000
Learn Optimism	-.038	-.63	.529
R sq	.736		
F-ratio	31.301		.000

Note: Betas presented are standardized betas

## Path Analysis

Multiple regression was used to determine which of the independent variables were directly related to the outcome, when other factors were controlled. Path analysis, which relies on multiple linear regression, attempts to isolate the separate contributions to a dependent variable made by a set of interrelated predictor variables. Table 11 and Table 12 present the results of multiple regression for two variables.

Table 11

Multiple Regression Analysis: Selected Predictors of  
Parent -Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI)

Predictor Variables	PCDI Scores		
	Betas	t-Statistic	Prob.
Mother's Education	.237	2.518	.014
Learned Optimism	.337	3.615	.000
R sq	.237		
F-Ratio	4.771		.000

Note: Betas presented are standardized betas

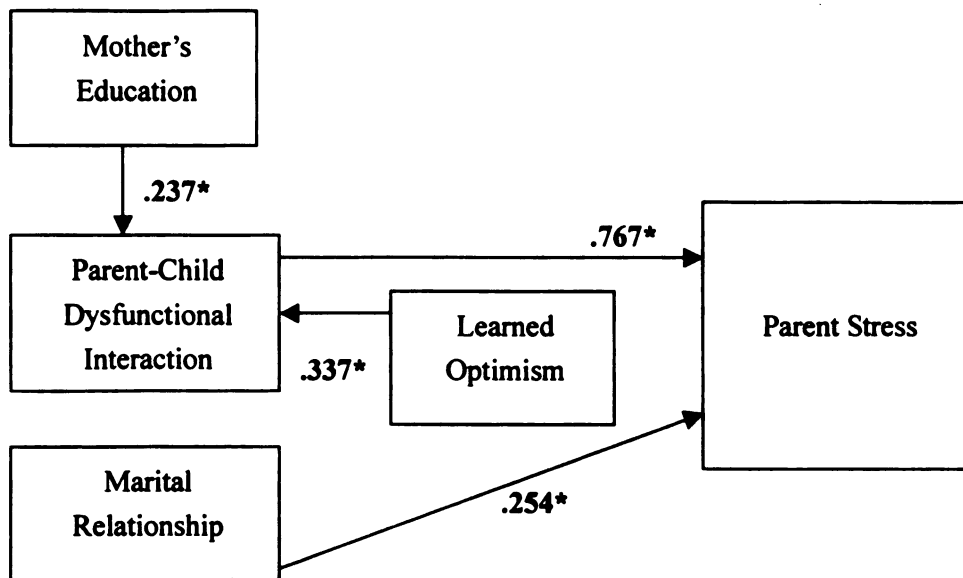
Table 12

## Multiple Regression Analysis: Selected Predictors of Parent Stress

PSI/SF Scores			
Predictor Variables	Betas	t-Statistic	Prob.
Mother's Education	.002	.036	.971
Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction	.790	12.721	.000
Marital Relationship	.258	2.599	.000
Learned Optimism	-.034	-.568	.572
R sq	.714		
F-Ratio	58.752		.000

Note: Betas presented are standardized betas

The results of path analysis are presented in Figure 2. Mother's education and learned optimism were significant predictors of parent-child dysfunctional interaction and served as mediators on the effect of parent stress. These factors did not significantly predict the parent stress with young children when parent-child dysfunctional interaction was controlled. Therefore, parent-child dysfunctional interaction and marital relationship had a direct effect on parent stress.



Path coefficients are standardized betas.

\* $p < .05$

**Figure 2. Path Model with Mediating Variables**

## **Summary of Results**

In this section, a summary of the results of the study is presented in terms of the research hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference between mothers who have higher education levels and mothers who have lower education levels on parent stress.

The data did not support the hypothesis. A positive relation did exist between two SES variables and parent stress, however; mother's employment had a slightly negative relation with parent stress (see Table 2). It can be seen that mother's employment impacts family annual income to the extent that it influenced parent stress. There was no significant difference with regard to mother's education level on parent stress with young children (see Table 4). A small research sample size of less educated mothers might have contributed to the lack of difference.

Hypothesis 2: Father absence was related to parent stress.

With regard to father's absence and parent stress, the data did not support the hypothesis. The researcher has data that shows all father absence on parenting stress scores are high. Therefore, this may be the reason that the correlation was not significant. This conclusion needs



further consideration because the whole military family sample experienced high parenting stress level in our data.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between parent-child dysfunctional interaction and parent stress level.

There was a significant relationship between parent-child dysfunctional interaction and parent stress. This result supported past studies included in the literature review section (Mash & Johnston, 1990) Mothers who endure parenting stress will trigger the negative quality of mother's interactions with their children. This finding is consistent with findings from other studies (Lavee, et al., 1996; Teti, et al., 1991).

Hypothesis 4: Mothers who have a satisfied marital relationship will have lower levels of parent stress than mothers who have a dissatisfied marital relationship.

The data provided support for this hypothesis (see Table 5). Mothers who have a higher satisfied marital relationship will have a lower parenting stress level. This finding is consistent with the literature which suggests that mother with higher satisfied and supportive marital relationship will be more available to respond to their children's needs and effectively adjust to the transition from couples to

parenthood (Easterbrooks & Emde, 1988; Beskly & Kelly, 1994).

Hypothesis 5: Father absence will be related to satisfied a marital relationship.

The data did not support this hypothesis. No significant relation existed between a father's absence and the marital relationship. There was a slightly negative relation between these two variables indicating father's intermittent presence at home influences the homeostatic equilibrium of the marital relationship. However, a father's prolonged absence does not seem to indicate the same level of influence. This conclusion is congruent with family ecosystem theory and consistent with past studies (Hammer & Turner, 1990; McCubbin et. al, 1976).

Hypothesis 6: There is a difference between mothers who have higher coping skills and lower coping skills on reducing total parenting stress scores (PSI-SF).

There was a significant difference between the two groups. Mothers who had higher scores on coping skills had lower levels of parenting stress. This finding is consistent with the literature that indicates good coping skills/strategies/ behaviors can make a difference on

reducing stressful conditions and role stressors (Billings & Moos, 1981; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Moos & Schaefer, 1993).

Hypothesis 7: There is a relationship between mothers' optimism scores and total parenting stress scores (PSI-SF).

The data provided support for this hypothesis. The finding is congruent with other studies that an optimistic explanatory style is generalized for expecting positive outcomes (Seligman, 1991; Scheier & Carver, 1992)

Hypothesis 8: There is a difference between parents with higher or lower learned optimism with regard to parent-child dysfunctional interaction.

The data did support this hypothesis. There was a significant difference between the two groups. This result supported past studies stating that optimists experience life differently than do pessimists. Ultimately, the higher learned optimism affects intra-personal relationship of successful parenting outcomes (Kogan, 2001; Sheldon & King, 2001).

Hypothesis 9: There is a difference between parents with higher or lower learned optimism on marital relationship.

The data did not support this hypothesis. No significant difference existed between the two groups. The researcher dealt with only learned optimism. It would be useful to globally study the relationships among husbands, wives, and children and the cultural factors on marital relationship. For example, In Chinese culture a woman is expected to be contented with the man she has married. Therefore, optimistic wives may devalue the efforts to enrich marital relationship even if she is not satisfied with her marital relationship.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary, Conclusions, Limitations, And Implications For Further Research**

#### **Summary of the Study**

The major purpose of this study was to examine individual and several family factors that influence parent stress with young children among military families in Taiwan. One hundred mothers of selected young children between 0 to twelve year old from military families in Taiwan were studied in 2003. The following research instruments were used to collect data: Parenting Stress Index-Short Form, Family Coping Inventory, Attributional Style Questionnaire, and Family Background Information.

The Study showed that parents who had higher scores on PSI-SF, a measure of their parent stress, experienced a less satisfied marital relationship than those who had lower scores. The relationship between parent-child dysfunctional interaction and parent stress was highly significant (see Table 2). Mother's employment and coping skills were negatively related to parent stress, though was

not significant. However, there were significant positive relationships between mother's education and parent stress, family income and parent stress, marital relation and parent stress, and learned optimism and parent stress. Father's absence was not significantly related to parent stress.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this study have demonstrated that parent stress and parent-child dysfunctional interaction were related to learned optimism among military family ecosystems. In addition, there is some supportive evidence indicted that learned optimism can buffer parent-child dysfunctional interaction, which may further influence parent stress. It is also worth noting that marital relationship was positively related to parent stress, validating past research. Findings from this study are consistent with the family ecosystem approach where organism-environment relationships are found. Families with permeable boundaries allow for human energy to flow in and out over time. Military families experience father's intermittent movement out of the home environment.

Although the sample is limited, father's intermittent presence at home impacted the equilibrium within the family. With regard to mother's education in parent stress, although data indicated that there were no significant difference between mothers who had more or fewer years of education on parent stress, it did show that mothers who had more years of education experience less parent-child dysfunctional interaction to the extent that this may influence parent stress.

Although the research instruments are standardized for use within the United States except for the PSI-SF, the researcher felt that these instruments are also appropriate for Taiwan military families. There were a few questions which needed to be explained in more detailed to the mothers by the researcher. The ASQ seemed a little difficult for Taiwanese mothers with regard to writing down one major cause that encompasses their explanatory style, but they did understand the meaning of learned optimism. Apparently, the learned optimism scale can be adopted and assimilated in Taiwan culture.

## **Limitations**

The potential limitations of this study concern the sample, and generalizability of the findings. The random sample size of one hundred mothers would not pose too many problems, except for certain small cells. However, the findings can be generalized to a population of Taiwan military families with young children.

Mothers were the primary respondents. Findings apply, therefore, only to parent roles of mothers. Similarly, only mothers of Academic Army Officers population were included as respondents. The generalizability of the study is also limited to a similar cultural population.

Another limitation of the study is the use of the two research instruments that were standardized in the United States. Caution is needed in drawing conclusions from the study.

Data from other countries are limited especially in regard to the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF). In addition, translation of instruments requires critical attention only to cultural measures of validity and reliability.



## **Implications for Further Research**

Replication of this research with a large, representative sample would serve to confirm or disconfirm the results of this study. It would be more comprehensive to include fathers as part of the sample. Military family fathers have their particular parent stress to fulfill their parenting roles.

The research indicated that learned optimism can serve as a significant buffer between parent-child dysfunctional interaction and parent stress. However, additional research beyond the scope of this thesis on parent stress of young children needs to be conducted to get a better explanation of this topic. As family structure dramatically shifts over the three decades, it becomes more challenging to be a parent within this rapidly changing society. We need to be more concerned about the impact of other social, environmental, and individual coping skills on parent stress, such as culture, occupation, community, and policies of the government.

Additionally, research is needed to fully understand what characteristics of children, parents, and contexts combine

to influence parent-child relationships and marital relationships. Although the results of the study suggest little influence of mothers' coping skills on parent stress, studying other aspects of coping skills with a large sample size may yield some valuable results.

## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **The Human Subjects Approval Letter**

**MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

May 13, 2003

TO: Lillian PHENICE  
Dept. of Family & Child Ecology  
107 Human Ecology Bldg  
MSU

RE: IRB# 03-372 CATEGORY: EXPEDITED 2-7

APPROVAL DATE: May 13, 2003

EXPIRATION DATE: April 13, 2004

TITLE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNED OPTIMISM AND PARENT  
STRESS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AMONG MILITARY FAMILIES IN  
TAIWAN

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete and 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.

**RENEWALS:** UCRIHS approval is valid until the expiration date listed above. Projects continuing beyond this date must be renewed with the renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewals are possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit a 5-year application for a 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 include a revision form with the renewal. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request with an attached revision cover sheet 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, 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 further assistance, please contact us at (517) 355-2180 or via email: [UCRIHS@msu.edu](mailto:UCRIHS@msu.edu). Please note that all UCRIHS forms are located on the web: <http://www.msu.edu/user/ucris>

Sincerely,



Ashir Kumar, M.D.  
UCRIHS Chair

AK: kmb

cc: HuiShuo Hu  
1639B Spartan village



**OFFICE OF  
RESEARCH  
ETHICS AND  
STANDARDS**

University Committee on  
Research Involving  
Human Subjects

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FAX: 517/452-4508

Web: [www.msu.edu/user/ucris](http://www.msu.edu/user/ucris)  
E-Mail: [ucris@msu.edu](mailto:ucris@msu.edu)

MSU is an affirmative action,  
equal opportunity institution.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Consent Form**

**Informed Consent Form**

**The Project: The relationship between "Learned Optimism" and parent stress with young children among military families in Taiwan.**

I am a graduate student in the Department of Family and Child Ecology at Michigan State University. I am working on a study that investigates whether there is a relationship between Learned Optimism and parent stress in Taiwanese parents who experience stress as part of military families. Data from this study will help researchers to understand factors related to parent stress and pathways on enhancing the quality of military family environment.

Thus I am asking you to respond to the survey questions that will take you about 45 minutes. There is no risk for you to participate this study. You can stop the procedure anytime and refuse to answer any of the questions. If you are not willing to continue this study you can withdraw from this study at anytime. All information that you provide will be kept confidential. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by the law. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Only I, Hsiu-Shuo Hu, and my major adviser, Dr. Lillian Phenice will have access to the data collected during this study. All of the data will be kept in locked file cabinets throughout the study. Your name will be stripped from the forms and an identification number will be used as an identifier for each of the forms. The identification number and your name will be kept separately. After six months your name will be destroyed. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Hsiu-Shuo Hu (07-7438224 or huhsuush@msu.edu) and/or Dr. Phenice (0191517-355-7680 or lphenice@msu.edu). We will be happy to address any questions or concerns promptly. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact-anonymously, if you wish- Ashir Kumar, M.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: 0191517 -355-2180, fax: 0191517-432-4503, e-mail: ucrlhs@msu.edu or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Hsiu-Shuo Hu  
Graduate Student  
Family and Child Ecology  
TEL: 07-7438224  
E-mail: huhsuush@msu.edu

Dr. Lillian Phenice  
Professor  
Family and Child Ecology  
TEL: 0191517-355-7680  
E-mail: lphenice@msu.edu

Please response to the below question before you start participating in this survey and write the date you participate.

Do you agree to the procedures and voluntarily consent to your participation in this study?

Yes, I am willing to participate in this study.

Signature:

UCRIHS APPROVAL FOR  
THIS project EXPIRES:

APR 13 2004

SUBMIT RENEWAL APPLICATION  
ONE MONTH PRIOR TO  
ABOVE DATE TO CONTINUE

Date:

UCRIHS APPROVAL FOR  
THIS project EXPIRES:

APR 13 2004

SUBMIT RENEWAL APPLICATION  
ONE MONTH PRIOR TO  
ABOVE DATE TO CONTINUE



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Parenting Stress Index-Short Form**

Name\_\_\_\_\_Gender\_\_\_\_\_Date of Birth\_\_\_\_\_Ethnic group\_\_\_\_\_Marital status\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's name\_\_\_\_\_Child's gender\_\_\_\_\_Child's date of birth\_\_\_\_\_  
Today's date\_\_\_\_\_

PSI Short Form

## Instructions

This questionnaire contains 36 statements. Read each statement carefully. For each statement, please focus on the child you are most concerned about, and circle the response that best represents your opinion.

Circle the SA if you strongly agree with the statement.

Circle the A if you agree with the statement.

Circle the NS if you are not sure.

Circle the D if you disagree with the statement.

Circle the SD if you strongly disagree with the statement.

For example, if you sometimes enjoy going to the movies, you would circle A in response to the following statement:

I enjoy going to the movies.

SA   A   NS   D   SD

While you may not find a response that exactly states your feelings, please circle the response that comes closest to describing how you feel. YOUR FIRST REACTION TO EACH QUESTION SHOULD BE YOUR ANSWER.

Circle only one response for each statement, and respond to all statements. DO NOT ERASE! If you need to change an answer, make an "X" through the incorrect answer and circle the correct response. For example:

I enjoy going to the movies.

SA   A   NS   D   SD

Before responding to the statements, write your name, gender date of birth, ethnic group, marital status, child's name, child's gender, child's date, and today's date in the spaces at the tops of the questionnaire.

SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree NS=Not Sure D=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree

1.I often have the feeling that I cannot handle things very well.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
2.I find myself giving up more of my life to meet my children's need than I ever expected	SA	A	NS	D	SD
3.I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
4.Since having this child, I have been unable to do new and different things.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
5.Since having a child, I feel that I am almost never able to do things that I like to do.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
6.I am unhappy with the last purchase of clothing I made for myself.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
7.There are quite a few things that bother me about my life.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
8.Having a child as caused more problems than I expected in my relationship with my spouse(male/female friend).	SA	A	NS	D	SD
9.I feel alone and without friends.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
10.When I go to a party, I usually expect no to enjoy myself.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
11.I am not as interested in people as I used to be	SA	A	NS	D	SD
12.I don't enjoy thins as I used to.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
13.My child rarely does things for me that make me feel good.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
14.Most times I feel that my child does not like me and does not want to be close to me.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
15.My child smiles at me much less than I expected	SA	A	NS	D	SD
16.When I do things for my child, I get the feeling that my efforts are not appreciated very much.	SA	A	NS	D	SD

17. When playing, my child doesn't often giggle or laugh.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
18. My child doesn't seem to learn as quickly as most children.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
19. My child doesn't seem to smile as much as most children.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
20. My child is not able to do as much as I expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
21. It takes a long time and it is very hard for my child to get used to new things.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
For the next statement, choose your response from the choices "1" to "5" below.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I feel that I am:					
1. not very good at being a parent					
2. a person who has some trouble being a parent					
3. an average parent					
4. a better than average parent					
5. a very good parent					
23. I expected to have closer and warmer feelings for my child than I do and this bothers me.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
24. Sometimes my child does things that bother me just to be mean.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
25. My child seems to cry or fuss more often than most children.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
26. My child generally wakes up in a bad mood.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
27. I feel that my child is very moody and easily upset.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
28. My child does a few things which bother me a great deal.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
29. My child reacts very strongly when something happens that my child doesn't like.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
30. My child gets upset easily over the smallest thing.	SA	A	NS	D	SD
31. My child's sleeping or eating schedule was much harder to establish than I expected.	SA	A	NS	D	SD

For the next statement, choose your response from 1 2 3 4 5  
the choices "1" to "5" below.

32. I have found that getting my child to do something  
or stop doing something is:

1. much harder than I expected
2. somewhat harder than I  
expected
3. about as hard as I expected
4. somewhat easier than I  
expected
5. much easier than I expected

For the next statement, choose your response from the 10+ 8-9 6-7 4-5 1-3  
choices "10+" to "1-3"

33. Think carefully and count the number of things  
which your child does that bother you. For  
example: dawdles, refuses to listen,  
overactive, cries, interrupts, fights, whines,  
etc.

34. There are some things my child does that SA A NS D SD  
really bother me a lot.

35. My child turned out to be more of a SA A NS D SD  
problem than I had expected.

36. My child makes more demands on me SA A NS D SD  
than most children.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Family Coping Inventory**

Purpose:

FCI is designed to record the behaviors wives or husbands find helpful to them in managing family life when spouses are separated for short, long, or permanent periods of time. Coping is defined as individual or group behavior used to manage the hardships and relieve that discomfort associated with life changes or difficult life events.

Direction:

On the next pages is a list of "behaviors" or statements that spouses may or may not use to cope with a separation experience. Please carefully consider "how helpful" each of these behaviors has been to you in your adjustments to separation.

Circle one of the following responses for each statement:

- 3= Very helpful
- 2= Moderately helpful
- 1= Minimally helpful
- 0= Not helpful

Please be sure and record a response for every item.

	Not helpful	Minimally helpful	Moderately helpful	Very helpful
1. Talking with other individuals in my same situation	0	1	2	3
2. Going to school	0	1	2	3
3. Learning new skills	0	1	2	3
4. Developing myself as a person	0	1	2	3
5. Making financial investment/saving	0	1	2	3
6. Doing things with the family	0	1	2	3
7. Involvement in religious activities	0	1	2	3
8. Trying to be a father and a mother to the children	0	1	2	3
9. Allowing myself to become angry	0	1	2	3
10. Believing that my husbands career is most important	0	1	2	3
11. Always depending upon friends to give me support	0	1	2	3
12. Trying to maintain family stability	0	1	2	3
13. Investing myself in my children	0	1	2	3
14. Becoming more independent	0	1	2	3
15. Reading	0	1	2	3
16. Believing that the institutions that my spouse and I work for have my family's best interest in mind	0	1	2	3
17. Taking advantage of local programs and services aimed at helping those in my situation	0	1	2	3
18. Wishing my spouse (or former spouse) was not gone and that things were different	0	1	2	3
19. Believing that my life would not be any better if my spouse were here (or my former spouse and I were still together)	0	1	2	3
20. Building close relationships with people	0	1	2	3
21. Taking advantage of professional counseling	0	1	2	3
22. Involvement in activities specifically for someone in my situation	0	1	2	3
23. Establishing a new life for myself	0	1	2	3
24. Drinking alcohol	0	1	2	3
25. Always counting on relatives to help me out	0	1	2	3



26. Being active in the local community	0	1	2	3
27. Doing things with relatives	0	1	2	3
28. Reliving the pas; reflecting on the memorable moments	0	1	2	3
29. Crying	0	1	2	3
30. Believing that things will always work out	0	1	2	3
31. Dating	0	1	2	3
32. Talking to someone about how I feel	0	1	2	3
33. Showing that I'm strong	0	1	2	3
34. Using Drugs	0	1	2	3
35. Making sure I take advantage of all the state and local economic benefits I have in my situation	0	1	2	3
36. Participating on a regular basis in planned activities conducted by others in my situation	0	1	2	3
37. Establishing a routine which is not dependent upon my spouse (or former spouse) being around	0	1	2	3
38. Believing that I am better at running the family and/or finance without my spouse or former spouse	0	1	2	3
39. Believing that this is our style of life and I should enjoy it	0	1	2	3
40. Always trusting my faith to pull me through	0	1	2	3
41. Doing more things with the children	0	1	2	3
42. Being a "good" wife and doing what my husband wants me to do	0	1	2	3
43. Believing in God	0	1	2	3
44. Doing volunteer work	0	1	2	3
45. Involvement in social activities (parties, etc.) with friends	0	1	2	3
46. Planning my future	0	1	2	3
47. Concentrating on hobbies (art, music, sewing, etc.)	0	1	2	3
48. Eating	0	1	2	3
49. Traveling	0	1	2	3
50. Always relying on myself to solve problems	0	1	2	3
51. Going shopping with the children or myself	0	1	2	3
52. Reading about how other persons in my situation handle things	0	1	2	3
53. Seeking encouragement, guidance, and support from my parent(s)	0	1	2	3
54. Engaging in relationships and friendships which are	0	1	2	3

satisfying to me				
55. Sleeping	0	1	2	3
56. Keeping myself in shape and well-groomed	0	1	2	3
57. Watching television	0	1	2	3
58. Going to movies	0	1	2	3
59. Remodeling or redecorating the house	0	1	2	3
60. Engaging in club work (church, PTA, etc.)	0	1	2	3
61. Telling myself that I have many things I should be thankful for	0	1	2	3
62. Keeping problems to myself	0	1	2	3
63. Going shopping with friends	0	1	2	3
64. Advancing my professional career	0	1	2	3
65. Living up to what society wants me to do as a parent	0	1	2	3
66. Participating in gathering and events with relatives	0	1	2	3
67. Socializing with friends of the opposite sex	0	1	2	3
68. Establish a new style of life-new friends, new activities, etc	0	1	2	3
69. Always believing that nothing bad could ever happen to my children	0	1	2	3
70. Seeking out friends who understand how difficult it is for me at times.	0	1	2	3

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Attributional Style Questionnaire**

## ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions:

- 1) Read each situation and vividly imagine it happening to you.
- 2) Decide what you believe to be the one major cause of the situation if it happened to you.
- 3) Write this cause in the blank provided.
- 4) Answer the six questions about the cause by circling one number per question. Do not circle the words.
- 5) Go on to the next situation

### SITUATIONS

YOU MET A FRIEND WHO COMPLIMENTS YOU ON YOUR APPEARANCE.

1. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is the cause of your friend's compliment due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

Totally due to other	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Totally due to me
people or circumstances		

3. In the future, when you are with your friend, will this cause again be present?

Will never again be	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Will always be present
present		

4. Is the cause something that just affects interacting with friends, or does it also influence other areas of your life?

Influences just this	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Influences all situations in
particular situation		my life

YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A JOB UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR SOME TIME.

5. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Is the cause of your unsuccessful job search due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

Totally due to other	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Totally due to me
people or circumstances		

7. In the future, when looking for a job, will this cause again be present?

Will never again be	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Will always be present
present		

8. Is the cause something that just influences looking for a job or does it also influence other areas of your life.

Influences just this	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Influences all situations in
particular situation		my life

YOU BECOME VERY RICH

9. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Is the cause of your becoming rich due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

Totally due to other	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Totally due to me
people or circumstances		

11. In the future, will this cause again be present?

Will never again be	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Will always be present
present		

12. Is the cause something that just affects obtaining money, or does it also influence other areas of your life?

Influences just this	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Influences all situations in
particular situation		my life



YOU DO A PROJECT WHICH IS HIGHLY PRAISED.

21. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_
22. Is the cause of your being praised due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?
- Totally due to other    1 2 3 4 5 6 7    Totally due to me  
people or circumstances
23. In the future, when you do a project, will this cause again be present?
- Will never again be    1 2 3 4 5 6 7    Will always be present  
present
24. Is the cause something that just affects doing projects, or does it also influence other areas of your life?
- Influences just this    1 2 3 4 5 6 7    Influences all situations in  
particular situation    my life

YOU MEET A FRIEND WHO ACTS HOSTILELY TOWARDS YOU.

25. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_
26. Is the cause of your friend acting hostile due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?
- Totally due to other    1 2 3 4 5 6 7    Totally due to me  
people or circumstances
27. In the future, when interacting with friends, will this cause again be present?
- Will never again be    1 2 3 4 5 6 7    Will always be present  
present
28. Is the cause something that just influences interacting with friends, or does it also influence other areas of your life?
- Influences just this    1 2 3 4 5 6 7    Influences all situations in  
particular situation    my life

YOU CAN'T GET ALL THE WORK DONE THAT OTHER EXPECT OF YOU

29. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_

30. Is the cause of your not getting the work done due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

Totally due to other 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

people or circumstances

Totally due to me

31. In the future, when doing work that others expect, will this cause again be present?

Will never again be 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

present

Will always be present

32. Is the cause something that just affects doing work that other s expect of you, or does it also influence other areas of your life?

Influences just this 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

particular situation

Influences all situations in

my life

YOUR SPOUSE (BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND) HAS BEEN TREATIN GYOU MORE LOVINGLY.

33. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_

34. Is the cause of your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend) treating you more lovingly due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

Totally due to other 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

people or circumstances

Totally due to me

35. In the future, interactions with your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend), will this cause again be present?

Will never again be 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

present

Will always be present

36. Is the cause something that just affects how your spouse (boyfriend/girlfriend) treats you, or does it also influence other areas of your life?

Influences just this 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

particular situation

Influences all situations in

my life



YOU APPLY FOR A POSITION THAT YOU WANT VERY BADLY (E.G., IMPORTANT JOB, GRADUATE SCHOOL ADMISSION, ETC.) AND YOU GET IT.

37. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_

38. Is the cause of your getting the position due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

Totally due to other 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

people or circumstances

Totally due to me

39. In the future, when you apply for a position, will this cause again be present?

Will never again be 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

present

Will always be present

40. Is the cause something that just influences applying for a position, or does it also influence other areas of your life?

Influences just this 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

particular situation

Influences all situations in

my life

YOU GO OUT ON A DATE AND IT GOES BADLY.

41. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_

42. Is the cause of the date going badly due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

Totally due to other 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

people or circumstances

Totally due to me

43. In the future, when you are dating, will this cause again be present?

Will never again be 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

present

Will always be present

44. Is the cause something that just influences dating, or does it also influence other areas of your life?

Influences just this 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

particular situation

Influences all situations in

my life



YOU GOT A RAISE

45. Write down the one major cause: \_\_\_\_\_

46. Is the cause of your getting a raise due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?

Totally due to other people or circumstances      1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totally due to me

47. In the future, on your job, will this cause again be present?

Will never again be present      1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Will always be present

48. Is the cause something that just affects getting a raise, or does it also influence other areas of your life?

Influences just this particular situation      1 2 3 4 5 6 7      Influences all situations in my life

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Family Background Information**

### Family Background Information

1. Husband's name \_\_\_\_\_ husband's birth date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ husband's rank \_\_\_\_\_ husband's base of  
military service \_\_\_\_\_

How long is your husband absent from the family per month?

Less than one week \_\_ One week \_\_ Two weeks \_\_ Three weeks.

Four weeks.

2. Wife's name \_\_\_\_\_ wife's birth date \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Age of each child	5. Sex of child
1. _____	M    F
2. _____	M    F
3. _____	M    F
4. _____	M    F

If you are a mother with a child/children, please answer the  
following question:

6. Are you currently employed?

1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ 2. No \_\_\_\_\_

7. If yes, are you working full-time or part-time?

1. Full-time \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Part-time \_\_\_\_\_

8. What is your employment? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Unemployed
2. Unskilled worker
3. Skilled worker
4. Owner of small business (ex. home business).

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ or No \_\_\_\_\_?

If yes, what is your role? Clerical\_salesperson\_\_\_\_,  
technician\_\_\_\_, child care\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ elderly care\_\_\_\_,  
housework\_\_\_\_, others\_\_\_\_\_.

If number 4 is no, go to number 5

5. Proprietors of medium sized business.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what is your role function?

Administrative personnel\_\_\_\_, minor professional\_\_\_\_,  
business managers\_\_\_\_\_, others\_\_\_\_\_.

If no, go to No.6

6. Executives and proprietors of large concern Business

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, what is your role function?**

Administrative personnel \_\_\_\_\_, major  
professionals \_\_\_\_\_, executive \_\_\_\_\_, others \_\_\_\_\_.

9. Please fill in the highest level of formal school achieved  
in the space provided \_\_\_\_\_

1. No formal schooling
2. Some formal schooling
3. Primary school graduation
4. Secondary school graduation
5. High school graduation
6. Partial college training
7. Standard college or university graduation
8. Graduate professional training

10. Total years of schooling \_\_\_\_\_

11. Total income of the family per year: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Less than \$12,500.00 (NT\$437,500.00)
2. \$12,501.00-18,750.00 (NT\$437,535.00-656,250.00)
3. \$18,751.00-25,000.00 (NT\$656,285.00-875,000.00)
4. \$25,001.00-31,250.00 (NT\$875,035.00-1,093,750.00)

5. More than \$31,251.00 (NT\$1,093,785.00)

12. To what extent you feel satisfied with being married?\_

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Somewhat dissatisfied
3. Mixed
4. Somewhat satisfied
5. Very satisfied

13. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your  
husband?\_\_\_\_\_

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Somewhat dissatisfied
3. Mixed
4. Somewhat satisfied
5. Very satisfied

14. How satisfied are you with your sexual relations with your  
husband?

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Somewhat dissatisfied



3. Mixed

4. Somewhat satisfied

5. Very satisfied

15. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband when he stays at home?

1. Very dissatisfied

2. Somewhat dissatisfied

3. Mixed

4. Somewhat satisfied

5. Very satisfied

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