Five Parenting Styles based on the Olson Circumplex Model

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Abstract

Five parenting styles based on the Olson Circumplex Model are described and findings based on a sample of 667 mother-father couples are presented. The five parenting styles are: Balanced, Uninvolved, Permissive, Strict, and Overbearing. About one-third of the couples reported each parent having the same parenting style. Parents with a Balanced parenting style appear to have the healthiest relationships with higher family satisfaction, lower stress, better couple and family communication, better couple conflict resolution, fewer problem behaviors per child, and greater confidence in parenting. Most parents reported having similar types of problems with their children regardless of their parenting style.

Introduction

This article introduces the five parenting styles theoretically based on the Olson Circumplex Model and assessed using the PREPARE-ENRICH Parenting Version (PEP). This paper briefly reviews the history of parenting styles research, describes the five parenting styles and presents descriptive findings from an initial sample of 667 parent couples. Suggestions are provided for practitioners using PEP with couples with children.

Parenting Styles Overview

Multiple schemas for describing parenting styles have been proposed over more than six decades of scholarship. Early work by Baldwin and colleagues (Baldwin, Kalhoun, & Breese, 1945) proposed three styles of parenting: democratic, authoritarian, and laissez-faire. Williams (1958) suggested plotting parenting styles on two orthogonal axes, parental authority and parental love, each measured from low to high, resulting in four parenting styles: ignoring (low authority, low love), authoritarianism (high authority, low love), overindulgent/permissive (low authority, high love), and democracy (high authority, high love). Williams further posited that love could perhaps be overdone and suggested that another parenting style existed in the case of excessively high love under high authority: overprotective/overpossessive parenting.

Straus (1964) used a four quadrant model with power and support as axes of reference to categorize parenting types proposed by other researchers. In the low support, high power assertion quadrant he placed demanding/dictatorial, authoritarian/exploitative, and over-demanding parenting types. In the low support, low power assertion quadrant he placed neglecting, detached, and ignoring/self-centered parenting types. In the high support, high power assertion quadrant, he placed overprotective, indulgent and democratic parenting types. Finally, in the high support, low power assertion quadrant, he placed cooperative, casual, permissive, and overindulgent parenting types. Straus' main contribution was to show how the interaction of two pivotal dimensions of family functioning (power and support) interact to influence parenting style.

Shaefer (1965), in review of the literature at the time, referred to two existing two-dimensional models: one plotting an axis of love versus hostility orthogonal to autonomy versus control, and the other plotting an axis of approval of parental control orthogonal to approval of expression of hostility. Shaefer then proposed a circumplex parenting model using three-dimensions: a) an axis of acceptance versus rejection, b) an axis of psychological autonomy versus psychological control, and c) an axis of firm control versus lax control.

Perhaps the most influential work on parenting styles is that of Baumrind, who proposed the authoritative parenting style in the late 1960's to fill a gap in the theory proposed by Baldwin regarding parental demandingness (Baumrind, 2013). Baumrind's work evolved over time and is often simplified as a two-dimensional plot of demandingness and responsiveness, although she asserted that these have to be understood within the context of the total parenting pattern, gestalt fashion (Criss & Larzelere, 2013).

Measures of parenting practices have been developed and tested based on Baumrind's typology (e.g., Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995). Baumrind's (2013) typology has come to include seven parenting styles: authoritarian (low responsiveness, high demandingness), authoritative (high responsiveness, high demandingness), disengaged (low responsiveness, low demandingness), permissive (high responsiveness, low demandingness), directive (average responsiveness, high demandingness), good enough (average responsiveness, average demandingness), and democratic (high responsiveness, average demandingness) .

In positing the parenting typology, Baumrind's basic philosophy stemmed from the Hegelian dialectic of opposing forces within any phenomena, which need to be synthesized for optimal functioning (Baumrind, 2013). Thus there should be some tipping point in each direction on a given dimension when one has gone too far toward one or the other opposing force. For instance, on a dimension of parental control, or demandingness, the opposing forces could be seen as total control by the parents and complete lack of structure imposed by the parents. A synthesis, or balance of control should be expected for optimal parenting. However, in Baumrind's typology, the synthesis resulting in the optimal parenting type, authoritative parenting, is between the two dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness. This results in the implication that more is better on each dimension—thus authoritative parenting is defined as high demandingness *and* high responsiveness. Others have noted that this implication doesn't always work. For instance, Barber and Xia (2013) found that demandingness/control could be curvilinear, depending on how it was operationalized.

Five Parenting Styles based on Olson's Circumplex Model

In Olson's Circumplex Model, the curvilinear constructs of flexibility and closeness are plotted as orthogonal dimensions (Olson, 2011). Flexibility is a measure of "*the quality and expression of leadership and organization, role relationship, and relationship rules and negotiations*" and closeness is a measure of "*the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another*" (Olson, 2011, p. 65, emphasis in original). The model is built on family system theory and posits that a balance is necessary on each dimension for optimal functioning. Closeness and flexibility are theorized as curvilinear constructs—too little or too much of either can lead to less than optimal family relationships. For instance, if there is too little closeness, the result will be disengaged family relationships. If there is too much closeness, the result will be enmeshed family relationships. There is a range in the middle of the closeness dimension

resulting in optimal, balanced closeness in the family. For flexibility, too much can lead to chaos while too little can lead to rigidity.

Differences in the theoretical constructs between the Olson parenting typology and Baumrind's typology are noted above so that practitioners and researchers can easily differentiate between the two systems. The five parenting styles are theoretically possible based on the Circumplex Model (see Figure 1).

The Balanced style is considered optimal because there is a balance of separateness versus togetherness on cohesion and a balance of stability versus change on flexibility. Balanced style parenting is moderate to high on both closeness and flexibility. The area of Balanced parenting style is larger than any one of the other four styles, acknowledging the diversity of positive ways parents can raise children well. The Balanced parenting style is characterized by warm and nurturing parents who are supportive emotionally, responsive to their child(ren)'s needs, encouraging toward independence (with monitoring), consistent and fair in meeting out discipline, and who expect age-appropriate behavior.

The Uninvolved parenting style is very low in closeness between parents and child(ren) and very high in flexibility. The Uninvolved parenting style is characterized by low emotional connection, low responsiveness from parent to child, high independence of child from parent (parents are disconnected from child's life), highly negotiable rules that are loosely enforced, and few demands made on the child.
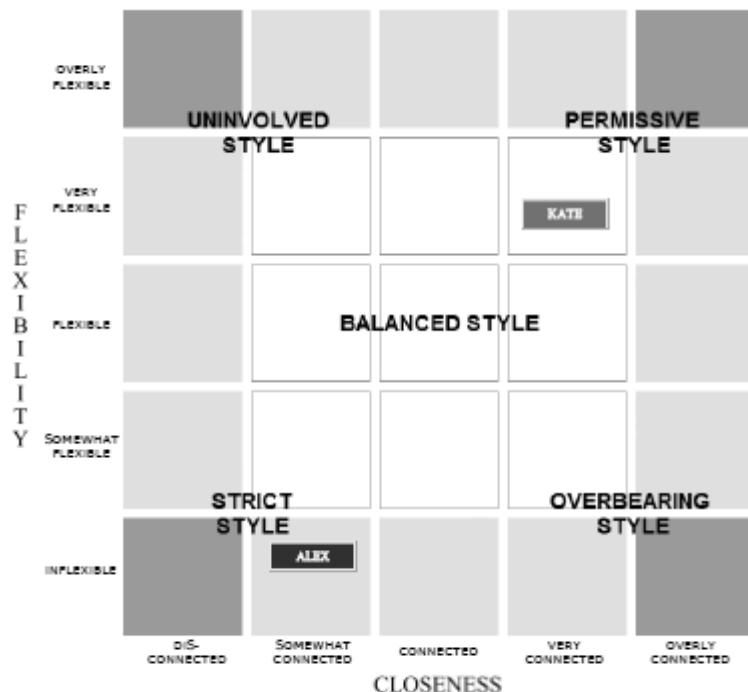
The Permissive parenting style is very high in closeness between parents and child(ren) and also very high in flexibility. The Permissive parenting style is characterized by parents who are overly protective of their child(ren), very responsive to their child(ren)'s every need, more of a friend to their child(ren), lenient in discipline, and unlikely to place demands on their child(ren).

The Strict parenting style is very low in closeness between parents and child(ren) and also very low in flexibility. The Strict parenting style is characterized by strictly enforced rules, highly restricted child freedom, firm discipline, low responsiveness to child, and low emotional connection between parent and child.

The Overbearing parenting style is very high in closeness between parents and child(ren) and very high in flexibility. The Overbearing parenting style is characterized by overly protective parents who cater to the child's every need and act more like a friend to the child while at the same time strictly enforcing a proliferation of rules with firm discipline.

Five Parenting Styles - Overall Style

- **Balanced Style.......** Healthy level of parenting Closeness and Flexibility
- **Permissive Style....** Very Connected and Very Flexible parenting
- **Overbearing Style..** Very Connected and Inflexible parenting
- **Strict Style............** Disconnected and Inflexible parenting
- **Uninvolved Style....** Disconnected and Very Flexible parenting

FLEXIBILITY

OVERLY FLEXIBLE

UNINVOLVED STYLE

PERMISSIVE STYLE

VERY FLEXIBLE

KATE

FLEXIBLE

BALANCED STYLE

SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE

STRICT STYLE

OVERBEARING STYLE

INFLEXIBLE

ALEX

DIS-CONNECTED | SOMEWHAT CONNECTED | CONNECTED | VERY CONNECTED | OVERLY CONNECTED

CLOSENESS

Couple Discussion:
- Discuss how parenting styles for each person are similar or different on Closeness and Flexibility
- Discuss how well their Parenting Style works for each of them
- Evaluate and discuss how they might want to adjust or change their Parenting Style in terms of Closeness and Flexibility

Methods

Research Method

A sample of 667 husband-wife couples (n = 1,334 individuals) was collected using the online couple assessment PREPARE-ENRICH Parenting version (PEP) (Olson, 2014). These couples were seeking to improve their parenting skills and to learn how to better deal with current parenting issues. The couples took the PEP online upon recommendation by a professional trained in the PREPARE-ENRICH Program.

The PREPARE-ENRICH Parenting version contains about 20 scales related to couple dynamics and parenting. More specifically, there are eight core scales in PEP that measure couple dynamics including communication, conflict resolution, partner style and habits, financial management, and relationship dynamics. Three couple scales were adapted to parenting: Parenting Stress Profile, Co-parenting or Step Parenting, and Family Spiritual Beliefs. Eight new scales were developed that dealt with parenting: five parenting styles based on Olson's Circumplex Model used to describe each parent (overall style and style for each child by each parent), confidence in parenting, child behavior issues checklist, and family communication (overall and for each child).

Data was collected online from both partners and individual scores were created in addition to Positive Couple Agreement (PCA), which measures the amount of agreement on the items in each scale in a positive direction. For some of the analyses, individual scores were used and in other cases the PCA was used.

Sample

About half of the fathers (47%) were in the age range of 36-45 years old, with nearly a third (32%) younger than 36 and 21% older than 45. Mothers were of similar ages to the fathers, with slightly more in the younger category (43% less than 36, 44% between 36 and 45, and 14% older than 46).

Ethnically, 76% of the mothers (n=662) and 77% of the fathers (n=665) considered themselves Caucasian. Six percent of the mothers and 5% of the fathers were (self-described) as Hispanic/Latino. Eight percent of the mothers and 10% of the fathers were African American. The remainder were Asian, Native American, Middle Eastern, other, or being of multiple ethnicities. Most couples (83%, n=660) were in marriages where both persons were in the same ethnic group.

Ninety-four percent of the fathers (n=663) and 50% of the mothers (n=621) were employed full-time. Another 25% of the mothers were employed part-time. For the fathers' employment, 71% were in executive, administrative, or professional positions, 12% were in skilled labor, 9% were self-employed, with the remainder of the employed men selected "other," "support staff," or "student" as an occupational category. Employed mothers also tended to be in executive, administrative, or professional positions (58%), 13% were self-employed, and the remainder selected "other," "support staff," or "student."

As would be expected by the type of employment positions represented by the sample, most fathers (n=644) reported earning higher incomes. Only 22% of the fathers reported earning less than $40,000 per year, 35% earned between $40,000 and $75,000, and 43% earned more than $75,000. Likewise, the mothers (n=552) reported strong earnings, tempered by the sizeable percent that worked part-time: 60% of the mothers reported earning less than $40,000 per year, 24% earned between $40,000 and $75,000, and 16% earned more than $75,000.

Religious affiliation was ascertained by asking whether participants considered themselves Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Orthodox, Other, or having no religious affiliation. Mothers (n=643) and fathers (n=638) reported being mainly Protestant (61% and 58%, respectively), with sizeable minorities reporting Other (19%, 17%) and Catholic (13%, 13%). Sixty-eight percent of mothers and fathers (n=615) answered the same on religious affiliation.

Most fathers and mothers reported having multiple children. The breakdown for fathers (n=667) was as follows: 0 children, 3%; 1 child, 18%; 2 children, 36%; 3 children, 21%; 4 children, 13%; and, 5 or more children, 9%. For mothers (n=666), the breakdown was similar: 0 children, 3%; 1 child, 22%; 2 children, 36%; 3 children, 21%; 4 children, 12%; and, 5 or more children, 7%. In most couples (78%, n=666), the mother and father reported having the same number of children. The moderate discrepancy likely represents children either (or both) had outside of the current partnership. For the cases where the mother and father reported having a different number of children, the mother reported having more in 39% of the cases.

RESULTS

Five Parenting Styles: Similarities between Parents

A fairly equal percentage of fathers and mothers scored in the Balanced parenting style: 50% of mothers and 55% of fathers. Fathers tended to have lower scores on Closeness (fathers' ave = 60.9, mothers' ave = 68.4, $t=-8.6$, $p < .001$) and on Flexibility (fathers' ave = 29.1, mothers' ave = 31.5, $t=-2.3$, $p < .05$) than did mothers. A breakdown of the percentages of mothers and fathers scoring in each parenting style is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of Five Parenting Styles by Mothers and Fathers

	Balanced	Permissive	Overbearing	Strict	Uninvolved
Mothers	50%	19%	15%	9%	8%
Fathers	55%	9%	7%	18%	11%

A surprising finding was that two-thirds (65%) of the parents reported that they do not use the same parenting style, so only about one-third of the parents reported a similar parenting style. The most common agreement between parents was when they were both using the Balanced parenting style (29%). Table 2 shows a cross-tabulation of the mothers and fathers parenting styles, with the diagonal from upper left to lower right indicating the percentage of couples who had agreement in their parenting style score.

Table 2: Mother and Father Agreement in Parenting Style

		Mother Parenting Style				
		Balanced	Permissive	Overbearing	Strict	Uninvolved
Father	Balanced	29%	9%	9%	4%	4%
Parenting	Permissive	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Style	Overbearing	4%	2%	2%	0%	0%
	Strict	9%	4%	2%	2%	2%
	Uninvolved	5%	2%	1%	2%	1%

Five Parenting Styles and Couple Relationship Measures

PEP includes the standard PREPARE-ENRICH nine core scales to determine the couple's couple type (Vitalized, Harmonious, Conventional, Conflicted, or Devitalized). The couple type was computed and the percentages of each couple was compared to the parenting style (see Table 3). For this table, because each couple could potentially represent two different parenting styles, we computed the percentages based on 1,322 individuals. As expected, there were a large percentage of couples in troubled family relationships (Conflicted and Devitalized).

A quarter (25%) of the parents with a Balanced parenting style had a Vitalized couple type compared with 20% of the Strict parents, 19% of the Uninvolved parents, 17% of the Overbearing parents and 11% of the Permissive parents. Close to a quarter (27%) of the parents with a Balanced parenting style had a Devitalized couple type, compared with 36% of the Strict parents, 41% of the Overbearing parents, 43% of the Uninvolved parents and 46% of the Permissive parents (see Table 3).

Table 3: Five Parenting Styles by Couple Type (row percentages)

Parenting Style	Couple Type				
	Vitalized	Harmonious	Conventional	Conflicted	Devitalized
Balanced	25%	14%	17%	17%	27%
Permissive	11%	14%	14%	15%	46%
Overbearing	17%	11%	7%	25%	41%
Strict	20%	12%	15%	16%	36%
Uninvolved	19%	16%	7%	14%	43%

PEP also includes standard PREPARE-ENRICH questions assessing the amount of agreement the respective fathers and mothers have on measures of couple functioning (e.g., couple communication and conflict resolution). It adds questions assessing the amount of couple agreement on family and parenting measures, namely agreement in co-parenting (step-parenting for blended families), confidence in parenting, family communication, and family satisfaction.

Table 4 shows the positive couple agreement (PCA) scores broken out by parenting style. A one-way ANOVA was done on each measure by parenting style to see if there were differences in the scores based on grouping by parenting style. For couple communication, those with a Balanced, Strict or Uninvolved parenting style had greater agreement in their communication than did those with a Permissive parenting style. Balanced parents also had greater agreement than Overbearing parents. For Couple Conflict Resolution, Balanced and Strict parents had greater agreement than Permissive parents and Balanced parents also had greater agreement than Overbearing parents. Balanced and Strict parents had higher agreement in co-parenting than did Permissive parents and Balanced parents had higher co-parenting agreement than Uninvolved parents. For those in stepparent relationships, Balanced parents had more agreement than Permissive and Strict parents. Balanced and Overbearing parents had higher agreement scores than Permissive and Uninvolved parents in confidence in parenting. Balanced parents also had higher agreement scores than Strict parents in confidence in parenting. Balanced and Overbearing parents had higher agreement scores on family communication than did Permissive, Strict and Uninvolved parents. Balanced and Overbearing parents had higher family satisfaction agreement scores than Permissive and Uninvolved parents. Balanced parents also had higher family satisfaction agreement scores than did Strict parents.

Table 4: Relationship of Five Parenting Styles to Other Parenting Scales (PCA Scores)

	Couple Communication	Couple Conflict Resolution	Co-Parenting (n=866)	Step Parenting (n=456)	Confidence In Parenting	Family Communication	Family Satisfaction
Balanced (a)	59.34[bc]	60.33[bc]	65.5[be]	63.34[bd]	72.32[bde]	52.44[bde]	42.61[bde]
Permissive (b)	48.38[ade]	49.13[ad]	51.71[ad]	48.74[a]	65.15[ac]	38.81[ac]	31.43[ac]
Overbearing (c)	51.99[a]	52.24[a]	59.16	54.13	75.52[be]	51.83[bde]	40.34[be]
Strict (d)	58.64[b]	57.88[b]	63.9[b]	54.88[a]	65.94[ac]	43.42[ac]	35.38[a]
Uninvolved (e)	58.09[b]	55.92	57.19[a]	56.58	62.18[ac]	41.46[ac]	30.61[ac]

Five Parenting Styles and Parental Stress

Parents are asked on PEP about how often common stressors of parenting, such as children failing to do schoolwork, discipline of children and sibling relationships, create stress for them. Combining these separate stressors created an overall stress index (0-100) with higher numbers indicating higher stress for the parent responding. Comparing the stress index by parenting style, parents in the Balanced style have the lowest average stress level at 33.5 (see Table 5), lower than any of the other four styles. Overbearing parents have the next lowest average stress level at 41.9, but this is only statistically lower than that of Permissive parents, who have the highest stress level at 52.4.

Table 5: Five Parenting Styles and Child Problem Behaviors and Parental Stress

	Average Number of Child Problem Behaviors per Child	Average Number of Child Problem Behaviors Dealt with per Family	Parental Stress Index (0-100)
Balanced (a)	6.4[b,d,e]	11.3[b,d,e]	33.50[b,c,d,e]
Permissive (b)	8.0[a]	13.4[a]	52.38[a,c]
Overbearing (c)	6.8	11.6[d,e]	41.89[a,b]
Strict (d)	8.1[a]	14.5[a,c]	44.91[a]
Uninvolved (e)	7.9[a]	14.6[a,c]	44.12[a]

Five Parenting Styles and Child Behavioral Issues

PEP includes a list of potential problem behaviors parents check to indicate whether a particular child displays a given behavior or not. Each parent separately indicated the problem behaviors seen, thus a husband and wife could give differing accounts of problem behaviors according to their own perspectives. The list contains 24 general behavior concerns (e.g., anxious, moody) and an additional seven concerns for adolescents and school age children (ages 6-18; e.g., sexual concerns, too much time texting), and a separate additional six concerns for preschool age children (ages 0-5; e.g., difficulty toilet training, temper tantrums). Three different methods were used to look at child problem behaviors in the family: 1) the average number of

problem behaviors per child as reported by each parent; 2) the total number of problem behaviors the family was dealing with (this was obtained by using a dichotomous measure for each problem behavior to indicate whether a particular problem behavior was being dealt with by a family or not—thus if any child in the family displayed the behavior, the family was considered as dealing with that problem behavior, then adding all the problem behaviors dealt with); and, 3) the top five problem behaviors parents in each parenting style indicated they saw in their children, by percentage of parents indicating the issue was present for at least one child.

Using the average number of problem behaviors per child, an average of 7 problem behaviors were reported, with a standard deviation of 4.6 and a range from 0 to 29. Table 5 shows a breakdown of the average number of child problem behaviors by parenting style. A one-way ANOVA showed that Balanced parents dealt with fewer problem behaviors per child (6.4) than did Permissive (8.0), Strict (8.1), and Uninvolved (7.9) parents. Overbearing parents dealt with an average of 6.8 problem behaviors per child.

Using the total number of problem behaviors each parent indicated the family was dealing with, each family dealt with an average of 12.4 different problem behaviors (s.d. = 7.5), with a range of 0 to 34. A one-way ANOVE showed that parents with a Balanced parenting style dealt with fewer total different problem behaviors (11.3) than Permissive parents (13.4), Strict parents (14.5), and Uninvolved parents (14.6) (see Table 5). Overbearing parents reported an average of 11.4 total child problem behaviors.

Table 6: Top 5 Child Behavior Issues by Parenting Style

Balanced (n=693)	Permissive (n=182)	Overbearing (n=145)	Strict (n=177)	Uninvolved (n=125)
Not Paying Attention/ Listening: 65%	Impatient/ Demanding: 78%	Not Paying Attention/ Listening: 64%	Impatient/ Demanding: 80%	Argumentative/ Angry: 82%
Impatient/ Demanding: 64%	Argumentative/ Angry: 75%	Impatient/ Demanding: 63%	(tie) Not Paying Attention/ Listening; Argumentative/ Angry: 76%	Impatient/ Demanding: 78%
Argumentative/Angry: 62%	Not Paying Attention/ Listening: 72%	Attention Seeking: 62%		Not Paying Attention/ Listening: 74%
Attention Seeking: 61%	Attention Seeking: 70%	Argumentative/ Angry: 61%	Attention Seeking: 72%	Too Much Screen Time: 70%
Impulsive/ Reactive: 56%	Too Much Screen Time: 67%	Too Much Screen Time: 56%	Impulsive/ Reactive: 67%	Impulsive/ Reactive: 66%

The most cited problem behaviors were fairly similar for parents in each parenting style (see Table 6). Children being Argumentative/Angry was the top problem behavior reported by Uninvolved parents (82%), the second most reported problem behavior for Strict (76%) and Permissive (75%), the third for Balanced (62%) parents, and the fourth for Overbearing (61%) parents. Being Impatient/Demanding was the top problem behavior reported by Strict (80%) and Permissive (78%) parents, second for the other three parenting styles (Uninvolved: 78%,

Balanced: 64%, Overbearing: 63%). Children Not Paying Attention/Not Listening was the top problem behavior reported by Balanced (65%) and Overbearing (64%) parents, second for Strict (76%) parents, and third for Uninvolved (74%) and Permissive (72%) parents. Other child problem behaviors in the top five included Attention Seeking (third for Overbearing at 62%, fourth for Strict at 72%, Permissive at 70%, and Balanced at 61%), having Too Much Screen Time (fourth for Uninvolved at 70%, fifth for Permissive at 67% and Overbearing at 56%), and being Impulsive/Reactive (fifth for Strict at 67%, Uninvolved at 66% and Balanced at 56%).

Limitations

This descriptive study is mainly limited by the sample used. The sample was somewhat low in number of cases in four of the five parenting styles; it is interesting to note that parents were willing to rate themselves at the extremes of flexibility and closeness. There was not enough power in the sample to discern some potential differences between the parenting types other than Balanced. The sample was somewhat homogenous in terms of ethnicity, income and religion, and a large percentage of the sample were couples in troubled marriages. Future research with PEP needs a random, non-clinical sample to establish norms for the instrument. Although the Overbearing parenting style was hypothesized to be less-healthy than Balanced, the parents describing themselves as Overbearing tended to also be doing fairly well by many of the scales.

Suggestions for Practitioners using PEP with Parents

The PREPARE-ENRICH Parenting version (PEP) is designed to help practitioners enhance the family life of couples with children. Practitioners receive a *PEP Computer Report* which is similar to the standard PREPARE-ENRICH Report. However, the PEP Report emphasizes parenting while still providing key information about the couple relationship. There is also *Couple Workbook (Parenting Version)* which contains couple exercises designed to help parents develop parenting skills and resolve current issues. Some of the couple exercises are specific to parenting and they include the follow: Parenting Stress Profile, Creating a Wish List for Parenting, and Creating a Balanced Parenting Style.

The *Parenting Stress Profile* asked each person to consider how much time they spend in each of five areas: work, personal, marriage/relationship, home and family. They each decide how much time they spend currently and also indicate how much time they would like to spend and then develop a plan to move toward those goals. Couples discuss what areas are out of balance and how they might support each other to achieve their goals.

The *Creating a Wish List for Parenting* couple exercise is designed to help couples learn and practice assertiveness and active listening. They share and discuss with each other what they would like to change in terms of their parenting. Typically a couple will share three items they would like to improve.

This study found that about two-thirds of couples report having a different parenting style than their partner. Also, it was found that the Balanced parenting style was the most positive in terms of outcomes related to their children. A useful couple exercise to deal with both of these issues is the *Creating a Balanced Parenting Style*. In this exercise, couples discuss how they might want to change their parenting style to become more balanced. Specific suggestions and

ideas are provide in the Couple Workbook for increasing and decreasing closeness and flexibility in their parenting style.

Summary

The Olson Circumplex Model theorizes five parenting styles of which Balanced (a balance of cohesion and of flexibility in parenting) is the healthiest. A surprising finding was that parents who rated themselves as Overbearing (very high in cohesion and very low in flexibility) also seemed to have positive outcomes, although the study is limited by low numbers of Overbearing parents. The Permissive parenting style had the most negative outcomes, with the Uninvolved style appearing just as negative but without enough numbers of parents in the category to establish statistical significance. As the assessment is used more widely by practitioners, we will be able to more firmly establish the findings about the five parenting styles.

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