

Family Stress and Child Behaviour

by

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ABSTRACT


All individuals experience stress in their lives. This stress acts as a pervasive force, influencing our relationships with our families, our friends, and our children. This study investigated the influence of family stress on the child behaviour of preschoolers, and how a sample of parents managed this stress. The sample of 27 families was selected from Victoria and area preschools. All participants completed Achenbach's (1991) Child Behavior Checklist, Sarason, Johnson, and Seigel's (1978) Life Experiences Survey, and Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, and Lazarus' (1981) Daily Hassles questionnaire. Five families participated in a structured interview of approximately one hour. Preliminary statistics revealed that, of the two dependent variables, life experiences and daily hassles, only daily hassles were significantly related to child behaviour ($p < .05$). Interview results appear to contradict the questionnaire data, with life events being more influential in regards to child behavior, than daily hassles. It appears that a perceptual difference existed between life events and daily hassles, which affected parents' utilization of coping strategies thereby influencing child behaviour. Limitations and future research directions are also discussed.

Examiners:



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Chapter One

Introduction and Statement of the Questions

Our environment plays a pervasive role in everything that makes us human. It surrounds and envelops us; it mediates our actions and our behaviours; it governs what we say, do, and feel (Selye, 1982). Environmental influence has been implicated in such important human characteristics as our attitudes and our social skills (Kaminoff & Proshansky, 1981; Pearlin, 1981). Psychologists are just starting to unravel the complex interactions that result when the environment interacts with the countless factors that mediate the process of human development. There is little argument however, that the environment affects our behaviour. "The environment made its first great contribution during the evolution of the species, but it exerts a different kind of effect during the lifetime of the individual, and the combination of the two effects is the behavior we observe at any given time" (Skinner, 1974, p. 17). The key to understanding human behaviour is to understand the relationships that exist between the environments to which human beings are exposed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The impact that stress has on familial environments is varied and complex. Research indicates that for individuals, the frequency and impact of life events and daily hassles are related to negative health outcomes and diminished energy levels (Sarason, Johnson, Siegel, 1978; Zarski, 1984). What is not clear, however, is how the individual's perception of life events and daily hassles impact the family unit. By examining the external influences that affect the capacity of families to foster

the healthy development of their children, researchers can better understand the impact of stressful incidents, and how to help families better cope with stressful incidents (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). It is through continued inquiry into how the systems in our environment interrelate, that we can come to better comprehend the complex processes involved in things such as children's behavioral problems, the breakdown of parenting skills, or the diminishment of coping abilities (Crysdale, 1991; Brennan & Margolin, 1990).

The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of the relationship between family stress and child behaviour patterns. As of yet, much of the research examining child behaviour patterns and family stress has been conducted on samples of adolescent children. One purpose of this project was to examine the stress-behaviour cycle in a sample of young children. Furthermore, very little research has been conducted utilizing interview data in understanding the family stress-child behaviour relationship. Therefore, both interviews and questionnaire data were used in this study to examine the stress-behaviour relationship in greater detail.

Through this project, the researcher has endeavored to develop a clearer conceptualization of family stress and its influence on child behaviour by utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory. Both daily hassles and life events were used as measures of stress, in an effort to provide an inquiry based on as broad a conceptualization of stress as possible. Koos' roller coaster model of stress management was proposed as a prototype about how families might

experience the impact of stressful life events (Boss, 1988; Burr & Klein, 1994). Finally, through the analysis of both questionnaire and interview data, the researcher has attempted to augment our limited understanding of stress, how stress impacts the family unit, and most importantly, how the impact of stress in the family unit affects child behaviour.

It is through the combination of the interview process and the collection of questionnaire data that the researcher attempted to answer the following questions in an effort to develop a better understanding of the stress-behaviour cycle:

- 1) How are parent's life events and hassles related to their children's behaviour?
- 2) Are life experiences and/or daily hassles significant predictors of externalizing or internalizing behaviour as operationalized by Achenbach and Edelbrock's Child Behaviour Checklist?
- 3) Are there any significant differences between male and female children's behavioral expressions associated with family stress?
- 4) How do parents view the interaction between their family experiences of stress and their child's behaviour?

An implication of answering the above is that practitioners might be able to develop a better understanding of how to provide children and parents with the necessary social support, coping skills, and management techniques that will best enable the family unit to deal effectively with both stress and child behaviour.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Family Stress Theory

Since the beginnings of time we have endeavored to better understand our spouses, our children, our parents, and our siblings. Correspondingly, psychological literature is abound with research concerning family issues. "It is because we value families that we focus on them. We believe that when we are wise in the familial part of our lives, then our family experiences can help us have rich and rewarding experiences" (Burr & Klein, 1994, p. 27-28).

Research into family stress issues began in the 1930s, and continues today. In 1949, Hill developed the classic model of family stress, the ABC-X model (Hill, 1949). This model is based on research stemming from post-war family stress. It attempts to determine X, the amount of crisis in the family, based on A - the event and its related hardships and how these interact with B - the family's crisis meeting resources, and C - the definition the family attributes to the event (X). The causal relationship that this model presents is linear in nature and it assumes that the factors contributing to X operate in a relativistic, cause and effect manner. The 1960s and 1970s saw an abundance of work with variations of this model; however, the utilized models bore few fundamental differences from Hill's 1949 theory (McCubbin, Joy, Cauble, Comeau, Patterson, Needle, 1980; Patterson, Garwick, 1994).

Since the 1970s, researchers have been trying to adapt the ABC-X model of understanding family stress, in an attempt to break free from the theory's causal

and linear approach to stress. Revisions such as the inclusion of feedback loops and coping strategies were introduced by McCubbin and Patterson in the early 80's (McCubbin, Cauble, & Patterson, 1982). However, because the ABC-X is fundamentally causal and linear in nature, some researchers contend that it cannot be utilized in a systemic approach to family stress. "Though the model has met significant heuristic needs, it does not provide for complete understanding of family processes under stress, not of the 'multiple interdependent levels of the social system' (Walker, 1985, p.827)" (Sorenson, 1993, p. 34). Furthermore, it is felt that the ABC-X model, even in revised form, is only capable of a 'snap-shot' conceptualization of the impact of stressful experiences; that is, it can not adequately account for the impact of stress over time. One way to overcome these problems is to conceptualize family stress through a different framework. One such framework is that of an ecosystemic model such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. It is through such a model that this thesis attempts to develop a better sense of the indirect effects of parental stress on children's behaviour.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

From birth, infants are bombarded by, and interact with, direct environmental influences such as parent attentiveness, culturally-based child rearing practices, sibling interaction, and childcare arrangements. Bronfenbrenner (1979) contends that such environmental considerations are essential components

in the understanding of all human behaviour. The ecological framework developed by Bronfenbrenner considers much more than the simple behaviour of any organism. It also considers how things such as the media, the family, peer groups, the school, child care, cultural ideology, religion, ethnicity, and the community, mediate and define a child's behaviour and experiences (Figure 1).

Bronfenbrenner's theory envelops four main systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem is defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (p. 22). In this system we see the individual as a main player in the action; the environment involves the individual as an active participant.

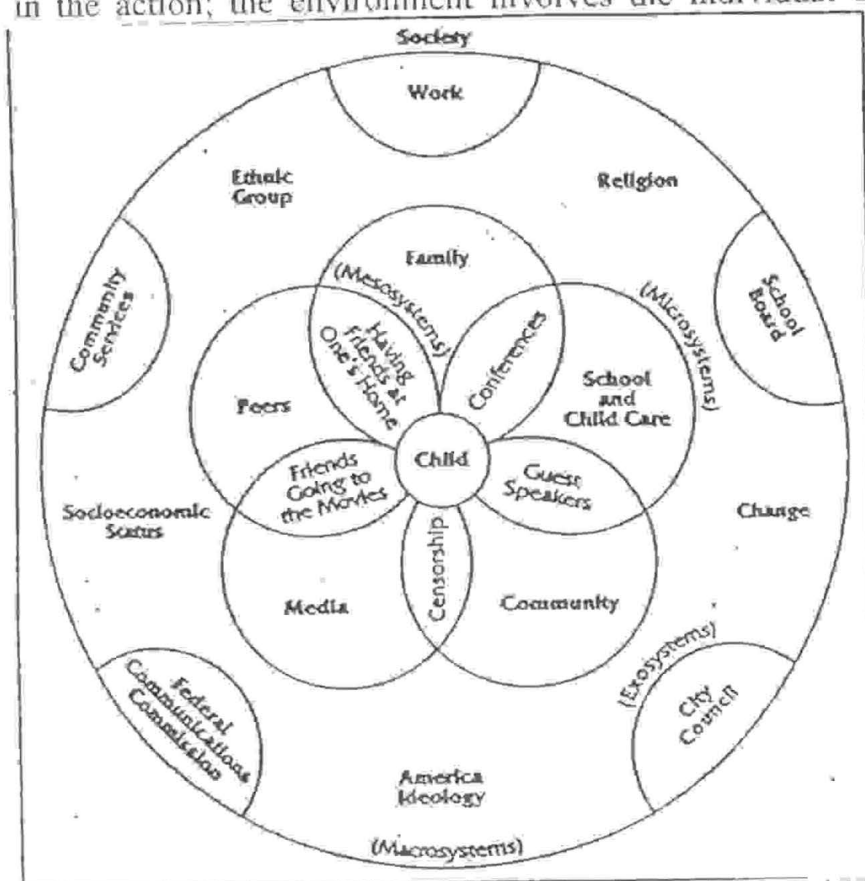


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development (Berns, 1993, p. 15)

The influences of the exosystem may not be as evident as those of the microsystem. These influences include things such as the work schedules of parents and the stress that individual family members experience. All of these experiences take place outside of the child's immediate environs. The exosystem is defined as "one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25).

The mesosystem, which considers the relationships and interrelationships between the microsystems is, perhaps, the most abstract and, yet most, important system of a child's environment. This system examines how the child's environments, or more particularly his or her microsystems, are interrelated. It is the mesosystem which helps us to understand better how things such as family factors, peer factors and community factors interact to affect how the child behaves within each setting. Interestingly, it also helps us to understand how a child's behaviour might have profound effects on a parent's workplace experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1980). The mesosystem is defined by Bronfenbrenner as "the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates...a mesosystem is thus a system of microsystems. It is formed or extended whenever the developing person moves into a new setting" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25).

Finally, Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem refers to overarching belief systems, cultural and social influences. "The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, exo-, and meso-,) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.26). Through examining the environments and their relationships to each other, we can come to understand better the individual who is ultimately a product of said environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

When family stress and child behaviour are examined through the lens of a systems model, the interactions between environments becomes clearer. Bronfenbrenner's systemic theory permits a glimpse into the many factors and influences shaping a child's behaviour. Through Bronfenbrenner's theory, we are able to examine behavioural outcomes as more than linear products of preceding events. Bronfenbrenner's theory allows us to examine various environmental influences, which mediate observed behaviour as we strive to better understand the impact of family stress on child behaviour.

Understanding Stress

Stress is a concept that is widely used in everyday language and in current writings. Its definition, however, proves elusive. In an attempt to understand stress, various definitions have been put forth. These definitions include conceptualizing stress as physiological arousal, the result of unsuccessful coping,

or a force requiring change of adaptation (Sorensen, 1993). Lazarus' (1966) definition of stress is more encompassing, and will be used in the body of this paper:

It seems wise to use "stress" as a generic term for the whole area of problems that includes stimuli producing stress reactions, the reactions themselves, and the various intervening processes. Thus we can speak of the field of stress and mean the physiological, sociological, and psychological phenomena and their respective concepts (p.27).

Despite the confusion surrounding its definition, stress is acknowledged to be a pervasive force in human life. Stressors initiate physiological responses which serve different needs. These include the fight versus flee response, and the provision of sudden, immense strength in the face of an emergency. These stress responses have undoubtedly saved many people in dangerous and life-threatening situations. However, in addition to adaptive behaviours, maladaptive behaviours are also a result of life stress. Our ability to cope with cumulative stressors plays a large role in the behaviour that we will exhibit in response to stress-inducing incidents.

In 1946, Koos proposed a roller coaster model of family functioning during stressful incidents. This model conceptualizes the family's response to stressful incidents, and is therefore useful in a systemic approach to family stress, despite its linearity (see Figure 2). Koos' model depicts four developmental stages of

family management. The first stage, represented by the leftmost horizontal line, depicts the family's functioning prior to the stressful event or situation. The second stage is one of two coping stages, and is depicted by a drop in the line. This stage is characterized by disorganization, and as the line drops, the level of disorganization becomes more acute. The degree to which any individual experiences disorganization will be mediated by individual factors as well as the individual's perceptions of the stressor (Burr, & Klein, 1994; Boss, 1988).

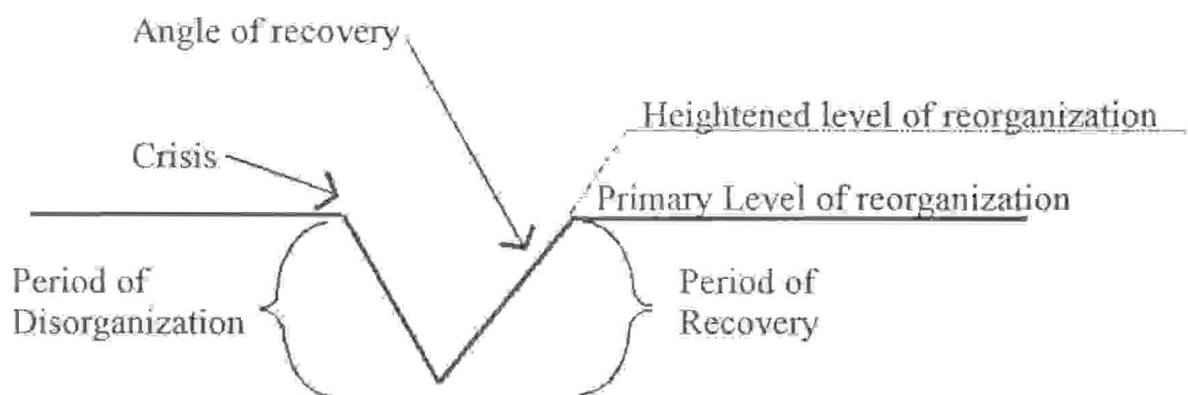


Figure 2: Adapted from Koos Roller-Coaster Model of Family Stress (Burr & Klein, 1994, p. 35) and Boss (1988, p.51)

The third stage of the Koos model shows a rise in the line. This period of coping is termed the recovery period, and like the period of disorganization, will be different for each family, and for each stressor. "If the coping strategies do not readily adjust the family system so it can handle the stress, then there is a large angle of recovery, and the family may continue in a disrupted condition for a long

period of time" (Burr & Klein, 1994, p. 35). The final transition occurs at the end of the recovery period. It marks the period when deliberate coping ends, and the family returns to an equilibrrious state of functioning (Boss, 1988; Burr & Klein, 1994). An adaptation to the Koos model by Boss (1988) adds an extending line (illustrated by the dotted line in Figure 2) above the line of the primary recovery position. This line represents the improved functioning of the family after recovering from a stressful event. "Crisis does not have to permanently break up the family system. It may only temporarily immobilize the family, and then after the turning point, lead to a different level of functioning...Many family systems become stronger than they were originally after they have experienced and recovered from crisis" (Boss, 1988, p.52).

We can see the value of such a conception of stressors in the family system. Not only does the model examine the family system in understanding stress, but it also allows us to consider that the family might be trying to deal with numerous "roller-coaster rides" at any single time:

When we use a systems concept of family stress, we recognize that several of these roller-coaster patterns could be occurring simultaneously in an interacting and overlapping way. In addition, a family may be in different phases of the developmental pattern with regard to several different potentially stressful inputs (Burr & Klein, 1994, p.36).

McCubbin and Patterson expanded on the idea of multiple stressors in their 1982 concept of stress pile-up. This notion suggests that a family may be experiencing numerous stressors, as well as numerous situations with multiple stressors. Furthermore, these stressful events may be in various stages of Koos' model. Finally, families that struggle with new stressors prior to dealing with previous stressors will tend to experience more difficulties than might have been experienced had they had an opportunity to deal effectively with the old stressors.

McCubbin and colleagues began looking at coping strategies in the mid-1970's, and this area continues to be an important one in family stress research. "It focused attention on the management process rather than on deterministic relationships, and it is a concept that has been helpful to theorists, researchers, and practitioners" (Burr, & Klein, 1994, p. 38). When the notion of coping strategies is used in a systemic model, the concern is not how a family's coping strategies directly contribute to the levels of family stress, but rather how these coping strategies influence the family system in its attempts to manage its stress (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

Life Experiences versus Daily Hassles

Researchers are currently examining two types of events which contribute to our overall stress (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981; Monroe, 1983; Sarason, Johnson, & Siegel, 1978; Sorensen, 1993). These events are classified as daily hassles and life events. Hassles include more rudimentary annoyances

such as being late for work, having correct change to pay the paper boy, and the mounding pile of laundry beside the washing machine (Burks, 1985). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) conceptualize daily hassles as those experiences and conditions of daily life that can be identified by the individual as threatening or harmful to his/her well being. Conversely, life events theory examines the major occurrences we experience in a set period of time (Johnson, 1986). These might include things such as the death of a close friend, change in employment, and divorce. While there is little doubt that both minor and major events are stressful, there is little agreement among researchers as to which type of events contribute more significantly to a family's overall stress (Doyle, Gold, & Moskowitz, 1984; Kanner, et al., 1981; Weinberger, Hiner, Tierney, 1987).

Steinhausen and Radke (1986) reported that life events were significantly related to child behavioural problems in a sample of children who were undergoing psychiatric treatment. Compared to controls, the child psychiatric group had higher scores with regard to total past events and past undesirable events. As far as recent events were concerned, the two groups were similar. Veerman (1995) found similar results in examining children who had undergone treatment for behavioural disorders. She found that the children who had been treated for behavioural problems had experienced more negative life events than their control counterparts. Further, she found that the sample children's behaviour was also significantly related to recent life events (Veerman, 1995).

“Perhaps one of the more promising areas of inquiry involves the extension of major stressful life events to daily experiences...the assessment of daily minor difficulties (or alternatively, pleasures) may be one avenue of study that could conceivably provide the researcher with a finer analysis of the tapestry of experiences comprising daily living” (Monroe, 1983, p.190). DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman, and Lazarus (1982) found that daily hassles were a better predictor of both somatic and overall health than were life events. From this research, DeLongis et al. (1982) suggest that the measurement of stress via the examination of daily hassles “could be an important supplement to the life events approach which, by itself, is insufficient for full understanding and practical prediction of health outcomes” (p. 119). The consideration of daily hassles versus life events, in measuring stress, suggests that a finer understanding of the dynamics of stress, coping, and psychological symptoms can be obtained from the examination of daily hassles (Kanner et al., 1981).

Zarski (1984), in a replication of DeLongis’ research, found inconsistent results. He reported that when the effects due to life experiences were controlled, daily hassles scores were significantly related to overall health status, where life experiences scores were not. However, Zarski’s study also demonstrated that life experiences scores are a better predictor of both somatic symptoms and of energy levels. Such research would seem to suggest that the use of only one measure, either daily hassles, or life events, may not provide the researcher with a comprehensive look at an individual’s experiences of stress in his/her life.

Family Stress and Child Behaviour

The stress we experience in our lives can have either a positive or a negative impact. The stressors may include a new job, or loss of employment, the birth of a child or the death of a loved one. Stress, especially stress we perceive as having a negative impact, affects our physiology, and research has demonstrated a considerable relationship between life stress, and physical illness (Sarason et al., 1978). All of these things affect how we interact both with each other and the environment around us. In many cases, our life stressors are the result of external incidents over which we have little or no control.

Few would deny that family stress affects each member of the family in unique and different ways. The coping abilities of each member will affect his/her responses to stressful incidents and these abilities will mediate his/her relationships with other family members. Children, however, can have an especially difficult time responding to stress inducing incidents impacting the family unit (Chandler, 1984). Children, especially young children, have had little experience with stressful incidents, and, therefore, they have not had the opportunity to develop coping strategies to deal effectively with stressors (Humphrey, 1984; Garmezy & Rutter, 1983).

“Parenting stress and childhood disturbances have complex, empirically-established links across a broad range of childhood maladaptive behaviors and psychopathological disorders” (Bramlett, Hall, Barnett, & Rowell, 1995, p.157). In the study of family stress, the power of Bronfenbrenner’s environmental

systems is demonstrated. Family stress and coping mechanisms have a significant impact in the family unit, especially on children.

Stress in a parent's life which is not part of the child's microsystem environment may, nonetheless, affect the child. Bronfenbrenner (1985-86) states that "What threatens the well-being of children and young people the most is that the external havoc can become internal, first for parents and then for their children. And that is exactly the sequence in which the psychological havoc of families under stress usually moves" (Bronfenbrenner, 1985-86, p. 432).

Often children's ways of responding to stress are manifested in their behaviour (Bell, 1979; Belsky, Lerner, & Spanier, 1984; Chandler, 1984). Some children internalize the stress and attempt to alleviate the family pressure through especially 'good' behaviour, while others act out in an effort to draw attention to their pain and confusion (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1984). Such behaviours tend to exacerbate family stress further, and the stress-misbehaviour cycle is born. Such a cycle becomes difficult to break. The child develops learned behaviour patterns for dealing with family stress, and the family members become accustomed to particular roles and methods of coping with stress. Bramlett, Hall, Barnett, and Rowell (1995) comment on this family stress - child behaviour cycle: "Evidence has shown that a number of child and parent variables may be reciprocally related...More difficult children are likely to elicit more coercive and negative parenting strategies...Similarly, parental behaviour is predictive of child behaviour" (p. 157). Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is hard at work here,

demonstrating the interplay between the child's micro- and exosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1980).

Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey (1989) propose that young children who experience disrupted family process, a state which may be related to family stress, are at higher risk for late childhood and adolescent delinquency. They suggest that the degree to which the family can mediate their stressors through coping skills, utilization of available resources and other management practices is related to the degree of disruption experienced in their parenting skills, and therefore in their child's behaviour. Patterson et al. comment that "The major impact of stress on child adjustment is mediated by family management practices. If the stressors disrupt parenting practices, then the child is placed at risk for adjustment problems" (p. 332). Their model demonstrates how poor parental discipline and monitoring in early childhood can have a significant impact on the child's later behaviour.

Patterson et al. (1988) claim that "The effect of disrupters on children's adjustment is indirect, being mediated through perturbations in parenting. Potential disrupters include a history of antisocial behavior in other family members, demographic variables representing disadvantaged socioeconomic status, and stressors - such as marital conflict and divorce - that hamper family functioning" (p. 332). Patterson et al., (1988) find that the disrupted parenting skills predispose the child to latter involvement with deviant peers, thereby exposing the developing youth to another risk factor for delinquent behaviour.

Family stress and child behaviour are complex and multi-faceted concepts. In examining the impact of family stress on child behaviour, we are left, therefore, with difficult questions. Through Bronfenbrenner's overarching systemic theory, we are able to begin to understand how environmental components influence behaviour and how stress in the family environment might be a factor in the development of child behavioural problems. Koos' model helps us to understand better how families might react in their efforts to make sense of stressful events. It also helps us to conceptualize how the pile up of daily hassles can have significantly more impact in the family unit than any single hassle. Through these models, and through data collected from the sample, the researcher has attempted to determine the extent to which family stress influences child behaviour; the degree to which life experiences and/or daily hassles predict behaviour types among children; and the differences between male and female children in their behavioural reactions to family stress. In addition, through the co-construction of interviews, a better understanding of family's experiences of stress and child behaviour was sought. Finally, the findings are examined with the intent to recognize how they can be helpful for researchers, practitioners, and parents in the daily management of family stress and child behaviour.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 27 parents who had at least one child with a birthday between July 1, 1991 and May 1, 1993 (4-5 year olds). The sample was made up of 13 male children and 14 female children, with 25 of the parent respondents being mothers, and 2 being fathers. The sample consisted of primarily middle class families with varied cultural backgrounds, 23% of the families had only a single child. The average age of the children of the sampled parents was 4.38 years. Participants were selected from Victoria and area per-schools through the distribution of a letter which was sent home to parents via their children (Appendix B). Those individuals who were interested in participating in the project contacted either their preschool teacher or the investigator.

Clearly the involvement of only two father participants in this study is a serious limitation in our understanding of the results, as fathers may well have different conceptualizations of both stress and child behaviour. This sampling problem was by no means intentionally created, and, while this paper refers to parent's responses, the reader must consider that the make-up of the sample was primarily mothers. In truth, this paper has become, for the most part, an examination of a convenient sample of mothers, their perceptions of stress, and their perceptions of their children's behaviour.

Procedure

When parents or preschool teachers contacted the investigator, arrangements were made to provide study materials. Included in the package of materials were consent forms (Appendix D1), a letter of instructions (Appendix D2) the Life Experiences Survey (LES) (Appendix E), the Hassles Scale (Appendix F), and the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). Participants were asked to complete all forms, seal them in the envelope provided in the package, and return them to their child's pre-school where they were picked up by the investigator.

Data Collection

In order to assess perceived family stress, operationally defined as both life events and daily hassles, participants were asked to complete both the Life Experiences Survey and the Hassles Scale. Participants also completed the Child Behavior Checklist to assess their 4-year-old child's behaviour. In addition, participants were also asked to complete the demographic questions contained on the CBCL form. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 6.1.2 was the computer software used both in the analysis of all study materials and in the creation of all graphical representations included in this thesis.

Parents were asked to indicate on their consent forms if they would be interested and willing to participate in an interview session after the collection of questionnaire data. The proposed interview session was to last approximately 45

minutes. The interviews were semi-structured, and a sample of the interview schedule is contained in Appendix B. Six parents were originally contacted regarding participation in the interview portion of the study. One parent was unable to participate due to personal time constraints. The five parents who, with the researcher, co-constructed an interview, represented a cross-section of the data in terms of life events scores, daily hassles scores, child behaviour scores. Parents who participated in the interview sessions were provided a listing of 21 Victoria and area counsellors and psychologists (Appendix G) in the event that they wanted to seek further guidance as a result of the interview sessions.

Instruments

Life Experiences Survey (LES)

The Life Experiences Survey [(LES) (Sarason et al., 1978) (Appendix E)] measures the frequency and perceived severity of life events as experienced by the individual. The checklist consists of 50 items, including three spaces which are provided to the participant to list life events not included in the inventory. Participants indicated with a check mark if the event had occurred in the last 6 months. The original checklist also included a 7-month to 1-year time frame. However, for the purposes of this study (so that the instructions on the different instruments were not confusing), the 7 months to 1-year time frame was removed. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire considering only the previous 6-month time period. If the event had not occurred, the item was not

checked. Participants were then asked to indicate the impact that each event had on them by circling one of the numbers associated with the impact statements. A seven point likert-type scale was used in the rating of events. A rating of -3 indicates that the event had an extremely negative impact, a rating of 0 suggests that the event had no impact, and a rating of +3 indicates that the event had an extremely positive impact. Three scores; a positive change score, a negative change score, and a total change score, can be calculated for the LES data. The total change score was used in the analysis for this study, as previous test-retest studies found it to be the most reliable. A total change score indicates the combined impact of all life events, and was calculated by summing each participant's positive and negative change scores (the negative signs are disregarded). For each participant, the frequency of life events was also calculated (Table 1). This scale was selected because it accounted for the stress of both positive and negative changes and it allowed the participant to rate the impact of each stress inducing event.

Test-retest reliability indicated correlations of $r = .63$ and $r = .64$ for the total change score ($p < .001$). These scores suggest that the "LES is a moderately reliable instrument, especially when the negative and total change scores are considered" (Sarason, et al., 1978, p.936). Research also suggests both that there are no significant differences between gender on any of the change scores and that the scores do not appear to have any significant relationship to social desirability (Sarason et al., 1978).

Hassles Scale

Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, and Lazarus (1981) designed the Hassles Scale to measure daily stressors such as social obligations, concerns about money, and meal planning. The purpose of the inventory was to provide a measure which could assess the impact of seemingly minor, common daily events on an individual's functioning. This scale was selected because it makes reference to a wide variety of events, including those which encompass family, work, practical considerations, chance happenings, friends, health concerns, and the environment (Kanner et al., 1981).

The questionnaire is made up of 118 items, including one item which allows the participant to include hassles that may have been omitted in the inventory. Each item represents a distinct daily hassle, and participants were asked to select the items which correspond to hassles that they have experienced in the past month. After selecting the relevant items, participants were asked to rate the relative severity of each hassle. The severity statements were arranged on a three point Likert-type scale, with a response of 1 indicating a somewhat severe hassle, a response of 2 indicating a moderately severe hassle, and a response of 3 indicating an extremely severe hassle. The inventory provided three separate scores from the data collected. A frequency score can be tabulated by summing the number of items selected; a cumulated severity score is tabulated by summing the severity ratings provided for each item indicated, and finally, by dividing the cumulated severity score by the frequency score the third score - intensity - is

derived. The intensity score indicates the average perceived severity of a single hassle (Kanner et al., 1981).

The inventory proves to be moderately reliable in test-retest studies, with obtained correlations of $r = 0.79$, $p < 0.001$ for frequency, and $r = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$ for intensity. These coefficients demonstrate the higher consistency of frequency scores versus intensity scores over time. For this reason, in the calculation of the correlation and regression, the frequency of daily hassles was used instead of either the intensity or the severity. Finally, no significant differences were found to exist between males and females in their responses to items on the questionnaire, and no significant differences were found to exist based on the age of the respondent (Kanner et al., 1981).

Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)

“Over the last 15 to 20 years, a number of measures have been developed (e.g., Connors Parent Questionnaire and the Quay-Peterson Revised Behaviour Problem Checklist) but the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) has emerged as the most widely used throughout the world” (Bond, Nolan, Adler, & Robertson, 1994, p. 103). The Child Behavior Checklist, developed by Achenbach and Edelbrock, is a comprehensive package of tools meant to measure behaviour in children 2-18 years old. It was developed in the early 1980’s, and was revised in 1991. Achenbach and Edelbrock cite the purpose of the Child Behaviour Checklist: “To record in a standardized format the behavioral problems and competencies of

children...as reported by their parents or others who know the child well" (Achenbach & Craig, as cited in *Mental Measurements Yearbook* 11, p. 159). Further, the CBCL represents an attempt to understand and classify "the broad range of child psychopathology having no known organic etiology and occurring in children presumed to be of normal intelligence" (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1978, p.1276). The wide use of the CBCL in both research and clinical settings and its statistical properties prompted its inclusion in the questionnaire package as a measure of child behaviour.

The CBCL/4-18 consists of 118 behaviour problem questions and 20 social competence questions. Parent participants were asked to indicate whether or not each behaviour problem is very, somewhat, or not true of their child. The social competence questions were answered by having the parent compare the child with "the average". In evaluating their child, the questionnaire asked parents to answer the questions based on the time frame of the previous 6 months. Achenbach and Edelbrock suggest that the time requirement for completing the questionnaire is 15-17 minutes (Achenbach, 1991).

In the scoring of the CBCL/4-18, two broad scale scores, Internalizing and Externalizing, are identified. The CBCL also provides both a Total Problem Score and nine problem scale scores: a)Withdrawn; b)Somatic Complaints; c)Anxious/Depressed; d)Social Problems; e)Thought Problems; f)Attention Problems; g)Delinquent Behaviour; h)Aggressive Behaviour; and i)Sex Problems. In assessing Social Competence the measure provides scale scores in the areas of:

a)Activities, b)Social, and c)School. These scale scores are summed to obtain a Total Competence Score. Each child's scores can be compared to normed scores for each sex at ages 4-5, 6-11, and 12-18 (Howell, 1996). The CBCL/4-18 was normed on 2,368 nonreferred children, while the externalizing, internalizing, and total problem scales were derived from parents' ratings of 4,455 clinically referred children (Kramer & Conoley, 1992).

The reliability and validity of the CBCL have been supported in numerous independent studies (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1984; Hensley, 1988; Fombonne, 1989; Harris, Tyre, & Wilkinson, 1993; Bond, et al., 1994). Overall the CBCL is a well received test:

The authors should be commended for their strong commitment that assessment practices (and interpretation) should be firmly grounded in research...The authors have provided strong, sound evidence for an explanation of three forms of reliability data (test-retest reliability, stability of ratings, and interrater agreement) and three forms of validity data (content, construct, and criterion related) (Christenson, as cited in Kramer & Conoley, 1992, p.165).

The Total, Internalizing, and Externalizing scores show very high internal consistency, with the other problem scales showing reasonably high internal consistency. The internal consistency for the Social Competence scores is noticeably lower. Short term test-retest reliability was high for both the Social

Competence and Problem Scales, and interrater reliability between parents is reasonably high, given the fact that different caregivers have different information and different perspectives (Kramer & Conoley, 1992; Hensley, 1988; Bond et al, 1994).

Cronbach's alpha was .89 or greater for Internalizing, Externalizing, and Total Problems, and it exceeded .7 for most problem scales for both sexes at all ages. A seven day interval test-retest garnered Pearson r 's exceeding .87 for Internalizing, Externalizing, and Total Problem Scores. Intraclass correlation coefficient equaled .996 for social competence items and .95 for problem items. When the CBCL scores were compared with scores from the Quay-Peterson Scale, Pearson r 's ranged from .71-.92. Correlations between the CBCL and Conner's Parent Questionnaire, ranged from $r = .77-.91$. Finally, when the CBCL was compared with the Rutter Parental Questionnaire, the obtained Pearson r 's ranged from $r = .78-.83$ (Fombonne, 1989; Hensley, 1988; Bond et al, 1994).

The validity of the CBCL is widely supported for a number of different applications. The problem items cluster into meaningful scales, and the problem scales correlate highly with similar scales from other checklists (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1984; Hensley, 1988; Fombonne, 1989; Harris, Tyre, & Wilkinson, 1993; Bond, et al., 1994). Construct related evidence is provided by the high correlation between the problem scores, DSM diagnoses, and the scale's differentiation between clinic referred and non-referred children (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1984).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to assess the relationship between family stress and child behaviour (Table 2). Family stress was operationalized both as the frequency of Daily Hassles, and the total change score on The Life Experiences Scale. Child behaviour was operationalized as the total raw scale score on the Child Behaviour Checklist. Descriptive statistics for all variables were generated and are shown in Table 1. Frequency distributions are provided for all variables in Appendix A, and boxplots of the data in Appendix C. Regression analysis was used to determine the extent that family stress is predictive of child behavior (Table 4). Unless otherwise indicated, a one tailed test with an alpha level of 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance. The null hypothesis in all cases was: $H_0: r = 0$ (the observed correlation will be equal to zero), and the alternative hypothesis was $H_a: r > 0$ (the observed correlation will be greater than zero).

T-tests were conducted to determine whether or not there were differences between boys and girls in behavioural outcomes. Again, a one-tailed test with an alpha level of 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance.

In analyzing the interview data, Kvale's (1996) Ad Hoc Meaning Generation was used. Kvale describes this method as "the most frequent form of interview analysis...a free interplay of techniques" (p.203). These techniques included noting patterns and themes, subsuming particulars under the general themes, and counting the number of times particular themes reappeared.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	range	<u>n</u>
Child Behaviour Checklist (Total Raw Scale Score for Entire Sample)	23.12	11.03	2.0 - 43.0	26
Child Behaviour Checklist (Total Standardized Scale Score for Entire Sample)	50.31	8.05	29.0 - 62.0	26
Child Behaviour Checklist (Total Raw Scale Score for Girls)	22.08	9.40	2.0 - 36.0	13
Child Behaviour Checklist (Total Raw Scale Score for Boys)	24.15	12.75	3.0 - 43.0	13
Child Behaviour Checklist (Total Standardized Scale Score for Girls)	50.15	7.82	29.0 - 59.0	13
Child Behaviour Checklist (Total Standardized Scale Score for Boys)	50.46	8.60	29.0 - 52.0	13
Life Experiences Scale (Total Change Scale Score)	10.50	6.72	0.0 - 30.0	26
Life Experiences Scale (Frequency of life experiences)	5.69	3.69	0.0 - 14.0	26
Daily Hassles	24.46	11.96	2.0 - 53.0	26
CBCL Internalization (Standardized Score)	45.15	6.10	33.0 - 57.0	26
CBCL Externalization (Standardized Score)	52.04	9.48	35.0 - 68.0	26
Withdrawn (CBCL - Problem Scale I)	2.08	1.96	0.0 - 7.0	26
Aggressive Behaviour (CBCL - Problem Scale VIII)	8.81	5.45	1.0 - 20.0	26

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

Preliminary Statistical Analysis of Questionnaire Data

This study involved the statistical analysis of questionnaire data from 26 participants and a thematic analysis of interview data collected from five of the 26 participants. One of the original respondent's data set was dropped from the analysis, as her data for the dependent variable was an outlier, well beyond three standard deviations (see Table 1). The mean hassle frequency reported by the present sample was similar to the mean frequency of hassles reported by Zarsky (1984) and DeLongis et al. (1982). The present sample's mean total change score from the Life Experiences Survey was also similar to the mean scores reported by Zarsky, (1984) and Sarason et al. (1978). Finally, the reported scores for the CBCL were similar to the normed scores developed by Achenbach (1991)

The original intent was to carry out a multiple regression analysis on both the dependent variable of child behaviour and the two independent variables, daily hassles and life events. This was intended to answer to the first research question: How are parent's life events and hassles related to their children's behaviour; that is, are parent's daily hassles and life events predictive of child behaviour? However, after generating descriptive statistics and correlations, the researcher chose not to carry out a multiple regression, as LES scores were not significantly correlated to child behaviour [$r = .16$; $p > .05$ (ns)]. A univariate regression formula was generated predicting child behaviour from daily hassles (Table 3).

The correlation between Hassles Frequency and Total Child Behaviour scores, as indicated by the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, was $r = 0.42$, $p < .05$. That is, as parent's number of daily hassles rose, so did their child's number of acts of misbehaviour as measured by the Child Behaviour Checklist total problem scale (Table 2).

In examining the second research question regarding the relationship between daily hassles and internalized versus externalized behaviour, it became evident that daily hassles were more strongly related to externalized behaviour. This suggests that, as the frequency of parents' daily hassles increased, the externalized misbehaviour of their children also increased. Again, life experiences displayed no significant relationship to child behaviour. Pearson r values for the relationship between Daily Hassles and Externalized and Internalized behaviour are $r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = .11$, $p > .05$ (ns) respectively. The correlation between Daily Hassles and Life Experience scores was moderate ($r = 0.49$, $p < .01$) indicating that, as participant's Life Experience scores rose, so to did their daily hassles scores. This finding is consistent with previous research (Monroe, 1983; Kanner, et al, 1981).

Table 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients Between Child Behaviour and Family Stress

Family Stress	Child Behaviour
LESTOTAL (Total Life Experiences Score)	0.16 (ns)
HSFREQ (Total Frequency of Hassles)	0.42*

* $p < 0.05$

A regression equation was calculated to determine the degree to which daily hassles are predictive of total child behaviour (Table 3). The percentage of variance of child behaviour that can be accounted for by daily hassles is 18%, $F(1,24) = 5.26$. Figure 3 depicts the generated regression.

While the correlation for the frequency of daily hassles and child behaviour is moderate in size ($r = 0.42$), and the correlation between life events and child behaviour is not significant ($r = 0.16$), this may be a product of lower than preferred reliability. Total maximum correlations can be calculated through the use of the following formula, where $r_{xy\max}$ is equal to the total maximum correlation; $r_{xx'}$ is equal to the dependent measure's reliability; and $r_{yy'}$ is equal to the independent measures reliability:

$$r_{xy\max} = \sqrt{r_{xx'} * r_{yy'}}$$

The generated total maximum correlation for the frequency of daily hassles and child behaviour is calculated to be: $r_{xy\max} = 0.82$. The generated total maximum correlation for life experiences and child behaviour is $r_{xy\max} = 0.75$. This demonstrates the relative strength of the correlations when the reliability of the measures are taken into account.

One-tailed, independent sample T-test's were conducted to examine the sex-related differences in the expression of internal and external behaviour (Table 4). This was done in an effort to examine the third research question pertaining to the

existence, in this sample, of significant differences between male and female children's behavioural expressions as a result of family stress. The standardized sub-scores from the Child Behaviour Checklist for Externalized behaviour and Internalized behaviour were examined. No significant sex-related differences were generated for either sub-score. That is, there were no sex based behaviour differences in this sample.

The 12 most frequently reported hassles, from the list of 118, are reported in Table 5. Kanner et al. (1981) provided similar data, and many of the daily hassles which frequently appeared in the current study's sample were also reported most often in their sample of the daily hassles of 100 middle aged, Protestant Americans. Similar results were also reported by Chamberlain and Zika (1990) in their study examining the efficacy of the Daily Hassles questionnaire as a measure of stress.

Table 3

Regression of Child Behaviour (Total Scale Score) by Daily Hassles (frequency)

Variable	Child Behaviour	B	β
Daily Hassles	0.42	0.39	0.42
Mean	24.46	intercept = 13.55	
Standard Deviation	11.96	F (1,24) = 5.26	
		R-sq = 0.18	adjusted R-sq = 0.15
		R = 0.42	

Raw Regression Equation: Child Behav. Total = 13.55 + 0.39(Daily Hassles_x)

Standard Regression Equation: Child Behav. Total = 0.42(Daily Hassles_x)

Figure 3

Regression of Child Behaviour Scores By Daily Hassle Scores

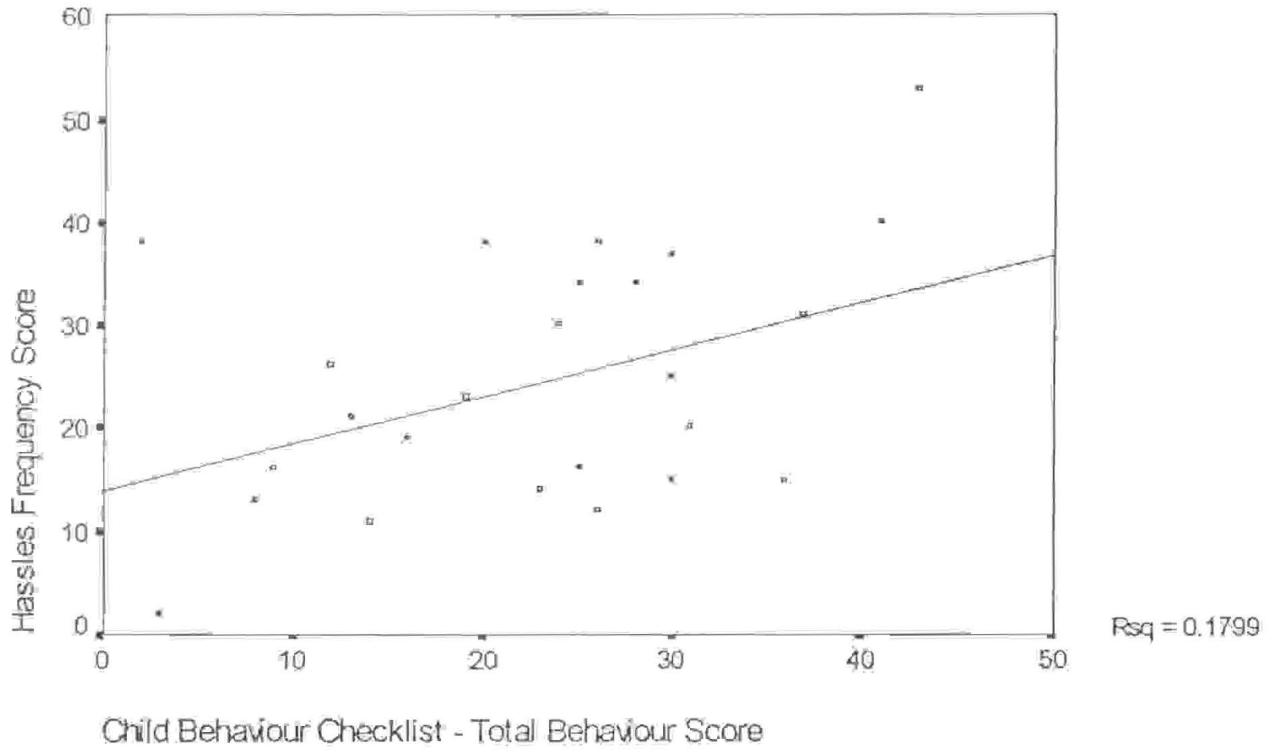


Table 4

Independent T-tests of Child Behaviour by Sex (n = 26)

	<u>t</u> (df = 24)
CBCL Total Score Standardized Score	-0.10 (<u>ns</u>)
CBCL Externalized Behaviour Standardized Score	-0.22 (<u>ns</u>)
CBCL Internalized Behaviour Standardized Score	0.96 (<u>ns</u>)

Table 5

12 Most Frequently Reported Daily Hassles (N=26)

Item ^a	% of participants indicating hassle
1. Misplacing or losing things (1)	81%
2. Not enough time to do the things you need to do (92)	65%
3. Concerns about owing money (10)	62%
4. Concerns about weight (91)	62%
5. Health of a family member (7)	58%
6. Not getting enough sleep (72)	58%
7. Physical appearance (51)	54%
8. Financial security (45)	50%
9. Too many things to do (79)	50%
10. Inside home maintenance (29)	46%
11. Problems with your children (74)	46%
12. Preparing meals (59)	42%

^aItem scale number is in parentheses following the item

Summary

Statistical analysis revealed that child behaviour was significantly related to daily hassles frequency in a sample of 26 Victoria families with preschool aged children. The mean number of hassles experiences by the families in the study was $M = 24.46$, while the mean number of life events numbered $M = 5.69$. Life events were not statistically related to child behaviour. In examining the behaviour that was related to daily hassles, it was determined that externalized behaviour was most related to family stress, as measured by daily hassles. Internalized behaviour displayed no statistically significant relationship with daily hassles. Life events were not significantly related to child behaviour. Sex differences in the expression of behavioural problems were not evident in the sample.

Thematic Analysis of the Interview Data and Discussion of Results

After examining the questionnaire data I turned to five interviews in my attempt to understand better the relationship between family stress and child behaviour patterns. Through these interviews, I tried to develop a better awareness of how we, as researchers and practitioners, could provide children and parents with the necessary social support, coping skills and management techniques that would best enable the family unit to deal effectively with both stress and child behaviour. The interview session lasted approximately 1 hour, for each of the three mothers and two fathers. A list of general themes was generated from the transcribed interview data (Table 6). Parents also provided suggestions for successful parenting strategies (Table 7). The interview protocol is provided in Appendix B-2.

In examining the questionnaire data from this sample, we see that of the two dependent variables, daily hassles and life events, only daily hassles are significantly related to child behaviour. On the basis of this questionnaire information life events appeared to have little impact on child behaviour. This interpretation would be supported by current research, which indicates that daily hassles are better indicators of family stress than life experiences. (Kanner et al., 1981). However, through the interview data, we are able to see that the issues are not as clear as the questionnaires might lead us to believe. The five individuals'

stories provided rich and deeply personal information. These interviews also assisted in my understanding of the child behaviour-family stress phenomenon.

The individuals who generously shared their stories were ordinary, everyday people. Like you and me, they move through the stressful, yet, happy, complicated, yet, rewarding, difficult and, yet, fulfilling paths of life common to many Canadian people. Even so, I found their stories deeply fascinating. Their experiences, triumphs, and even their sorrows reminded me of the intense strength of the human spirit. These individuals showed an incredible ability to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds. I share with you their stories:

The Interview Participants

Lorne*

Lorne, father of two, is a self-employed contractor. His wife works in health services, and his daughters, Suzanna and Michele are 4½ and 7½ years old, respectively. Because Lorne is self-employed, he enjoys getting his daughters ready for school in the morning and taking them to their extra-curricular activities after school. He describes a busy life, filled with family activities.

* Names and details have been changed to protect the anonymity of the interview participants and their families.

When Lorne was queried about the stress levels in his family, he responded that "it hasn't been that bad in the last couple of years. However, about two years ago I had major financial problems, and that was a very stressful time". While Lorne could think of no major life events that had occurred in the previous six months, he did describe the impact of daily hassles in his life. "We believe in doing everything we can for the kids, while at the same time doing something for ourselves, but we don't get much opportunity for that. It's hard, because you're so damn tired half the time..." (Lorne). Despite this description of the impact of daily hassles, Lorne did not identify the presence of daily hassles as being stressful. Furthermore, Lorne indicated that he did not feel that his children's behaviour was affected by stress levels in his family: "I can think of the stress we've gone through, and I don't believe it has really affected the kids."

Lorne indicated that strong partnering and consistency in disciplining were very important in effective parenting. In all, Lorne believes that he is lucky to have started his family later than many of his friends. While he believes that at a younger age he might have had more energy, he also thinks that, because he is an older parent, his life experience, the strength of his relationship with his wife, and his financial security far outweigh the benefits of younger parenting.

Claire*

Claire is a mother of three children, Patrick, Susan and Simon. Patrick is 4½ years old, Susan is 3 years old and, Simon 4 months old. Claire has a university degree, and is currently a stay-at-home mom. Her husband Peter, also a degree holder, is employed in the Health Services sector. Claire's family experienced the death of a close family member, Julie, in December of 1996. Claire characterized the death of Julie as "extreme family stress" and she feels that it had a major impact on their children's behaviour, especially on Patrick. "It affected him very deeply and it has continued to affect him...he had this level of sadness that was hard to get to. As opposed to an adult who can express their sadness, we discovered we had to pursue him in his grief...we [also] had a lot of aggressive behaviour..." (Claire).

Claire indicated how important family cohesiveness and solid partnering were in managing the stress of Julie's death. "We had this six week period that we were all at home together...we were really able to come together as a family" (Claire). She also noted the positive changes that were realized in her son Patrick as a result of the death. "It brought out a gentleness and sensitivity in him " (Claire). Claire stated the importance of her extended family, community, and church in her family's stress management.

Kandis^{*}

Kandis is a mother of two boys, Eric and Casey, aged 5 and aged 7, respectively. Kandis' husband, Jeffery, is a manager for a local company. Kandis has recently returned to university to work on a graduate degree. At the time of the interview, Kandis did not feel that her family was experiencing any "real" stress. Furthermore, she felt that her children did not really display any behavioural changes in response to fluctuating stress levels in her family. Regarding behaviour management, Kandis felt that open communication and clear boundary setting were crucial parenting skills. Kandis also felt that her children were more affected by stress which had personal meaning to them rather than general family stress.

Jackie^{*}

Jackie is a mother of 4 children, Kim, Joseph, Keith, and Ryan. Kim, the youngest is 5 years old, while Joseph is 10, Keith is 12, and Ryan is 13 years old. Jackie recently separated from her husband, who now lives in another province. In the past year, Jackie has suffered life-threatening illness and has been hospitalized on a number of occasions. Because of her illness, Jackie and her family have been forced to rely on social services support. Jackie feels that her illness has affected her children in different ways. Furthermore, she feels that her illness has resulted in both negative and positive changes in her children. "It's

made them better people; more caring, and more understanding of disabilities" (Jackie). In Kim, the most significant negative behavioural change that Jackie noticed was an increase in separation anxiety. "She became very clingy...at first, when I put her in daycare, I couldn't figure out why she was screaming when I would leave her..." (Jackie).

In managing her family during times of high stress, Jackie finds that open communication is the single most important ingredient: "We were very open right from the start. We thought that even at her age, Kim needed to know that I was very sick" (Jackie). However, Jackie too notes that there is a variation in her children's responses to different types of life events. When her family experienced financial difficulties, she didn't feel that her children demonstrated any real behavioural change. "I don't think that they noticed...as long as they get what they want..."(Jackie). Finally, Jackie credits her extended family and her friends for supporting her and her children through their family stress. "We have a very, very strong family...they[the children] have no doubt that if something was to happen to me that they would be with someone who loved them" (Jackie).

Nathan*

Nathan and his wife, Martine, have two children. Their youngest is Robert who is 20 months old, and their eldest is Heather at 5 years old. Nathan is a financial adviser with a large Victoria firm. In regards to family stress, Nathan

could think of no specific incident in which he felt that Heather's behaviour had changed in response to family stress. "We have been fairly fortunate in the sense that any type of stress we have experienced has been around myself and my job" (Nathan). Furthermore, Nathan emphasized the importance of protecting his children from certain types of stress: "Anything that doesn't pertain to or does not involve the children, we try not to discuss until a time when they are not present in the room. If it does involve them, we put it into simplistic terms so they can understand and deal with it" (Nathan). Nathan also notes that strong partnering, open communication, and the use of consistent and natural consequences are important parenting strategies.

Parents' Stories

Parent's stories revealed that there is a perceptual difference between daily hassles and life events. It is my belief that this perceptual difference results in coping differences. Furthermore, it would seem that these differences in coping are one of the influencing factors in the emergence of child behavioural problems.

It appears that parents who were dealing with life events perceived these events as stressful, resulting in their use of active coping skills. As a consequence of active coping, these parents tended to interact more positively with their children, thus heading off child behavioural problems. Conversely, parents dealing with daily hassles alone, tended not to utilize active coping. They did not

consider daily hassles to be stressful in the same manner as they did life events and, hence, they did not tend to head off children's behavioural problems through active coping. When queried about how they managed both their children and their stress, parents indicated that they indeed possessed many active coping skills. It appears, however, that these skills were not utilized unless life experience stress demanded them.

In the interview context, parents who were dealing with major life events were more likely to report stress-related behavioural outcomes in their children than parents who were dealing with daily hassles alone. Conversely, the questionnaire data indicate no statistically significant relationship between life events and child mis-behaviour. Furthermore, the presence of daily hassles in the questionnaire data is associated with higher levels of child behavioural problems. We are, thus, faced with a picture of family stress and child behaviour that is growing in depth and complexity. How are we to make sense of seemingly contradictory results from the same sample? While their questionnaire data support the sentiments that daily hassles "provide a more powerful assessment of stress than the life-events approach", their narrative data suggest that child behaviour is most disrupted in the face of life events, and is, for the most part, not affected by daily hassles alone (Chamberlain, & Zika, 1990, p.479). What mediating factors intervene in the experiences of parents and children to bring about these results?

Interview Themes

The emergence of numerous themes from the interview data demonstrate that the interaction of perceptions, awareness, and coping may be influencing family's understanding and processing of all stressful events, both daily hassles and life events (Table 6). These perceptions may, in turn, influence children's behavioural patterns. In conducting and analyzing the interviews, it became evident that parents perceive daily hassles and life events differently.

Table 6

Structured Interview Themes (N=5)

1. Parents perceive daily hassles and life experiences differently.
 2. Parents see daily hassles as being a part of life - not as being stressful in the same way as death or illness.
 3. For the most part, parents actively cope with life experiences such as death or illness - their active coping skills include such things as actively seeking support, seeking outside resources, pre-planning parental responses to stressful incidents, and facilitating open communication amongst all family members.
 4. Parents seek outside resources when coping with life experiences - these resources included such things as literature, parenting classes, seminars, and formal education.
 5. For the most part, parents do not consciously cope with daily hassles stress. Nor do they consciously utilize their active coping skills.
 6. Family stress and child misbehaviour are cyclical in nature
 7. Parents identify behavioural improvements in their children (in addition to behavioural problems) as a result of life experience stress.
 8. Parents identify the most stressful things both as work related pressures and as those things over which they have no control.
-

The first two interview themes [*Parents perceive daily hassles and life experiences differently (Theme 1)*, and *Parents see daily hassles as being a part of life(Theme 2)*] demonstrate how perceptions influence awareness and coping. As stated by Lorne, when commenting on the 6 month time frame of the questionnaire data: “The last six months weren’t a big deal for us, it was two and a half years ago when all our stress was...Why six months? Life doesn’t happen in six months...” (Lorne). It would appear, that parents do not consider daily hassles to be highly stressful events. While they could easily identify periods of stress in their lives, these times were associated with major life experiences such as bankruptcy, cancer, death of a loved one, and marital difficulties. When parents were able to identify that children’s behaviour was reflective of stress in the family, it was always in response to major life events. “One of the things that we have learned is how much what Peter and I are going through and what we’re feeling affects our children” (Claire). These differences in the perceptions of major life events versus daily hassles appear to affect children’s behaviour. Through listening to and analyzing parents' stories, it appears that these effects are realized as a result of differences in coping.

The use of *active coping for life events (Theme 3)* and the use of *passive coping for daily hassles (Theme 5)* are main themes that emerged from the interviews. When it was easy to identify an event as stressful, and not just a part of life, parents engaged in active coping. Regardless of how tired they were, or

how many other things they had to accomplish, parents reported making a conscious effort both to deal with and to help their children deal with major life events. Because they viewed daily hassles as an inevitable part of their daily experiences, parents tended, however, to make no conscious effort to address these issues with their children. This passive coping response to managing daily hassles was insufficient for the sampled children, and it was often insufficient for the sampled parents as well. For the children, insufficient coping strategies resulted in both increased frequency and severity of behavioural difficulties. In the adults, these inadequate coping strategies resulted in, what McCubbin and Patterson (1982) referred to, as stress pile-up. Left unchecked, this increasing “pile” of daily hassles has the potential to erupt into a major life event.

Parents described the periods of high stress during life experiences as times when they were able to extend their parenting skills. Much of this learning comes about because *Parents sought outside resources when coping with life experiences (Theme 4)*. “I think, because of what we’ve just been through, we’ve learned a lot. It’s been a very high learning curve for us as parents” (Claire). Barnett, Hall and Bramlett (1990) suggest that these learning experiences play an integral part in parental stress and coping: “Factors associated with parent stress and coping may be directly associated with the provision of learning experiences by parents” (p.13).

This heightened learning can be viewed as a component of active coping. Parents from this sample, who were in the process of dealing with major life events, were more likely to both actively cope with that stressor and to focus attention on helping their children cope. This, perhaps, translates into less frequent child behavioural problems. Active coping responses involve the intentional use of management strategies in order to deal with stressful events (Barrett & Campos, 1991). Parents, in this sample, engaging in active coping, sought out numerous resources in order to help both them and their children to manage stressful events.

Despite the fact that daily hassle stress may not induce active coping, it still requires energy and resources to manage. One parent noted that this may leave less energy and resources to devote to parenting. As a consequence, the parent felt *that children likely receive less attention when their parental unit is engaged in stress management*. "I just think that, when there's family stress going on, the parents are under all this stress. They don't necessarily notice what's happening with the kids" (Kandis). This is consistent with Teti, Nakagawa, Das and Wirth's (1991) research on the relationships between parenting stress and child development in 2-year-olds. They found that "parenting stress was associated with less maternal involvement during free play observations" (p. 444).

In this study, those parents who appeared to be most likely to utilize active coping in response to stress were those who were in the midst of responding to a

major life event. Those parents who were dealing solely with day to day hassles were less able to identify them as stress, and, therefore, they could provide few examples of active coping and its influence on their parenting situations.

Parents also note the *cyclical nature of family stress and child behaviour* (Theme 6): "He [Patrick*] was really acting out...and we were having a really hard time with him - he was pressing all our buttons - everything constantly...so when he came back [from time away from his parents] he came back just totally changed, it was really 'do-able'...'okay, now we can deal with this, it's okay now'" (Claire). This is consistent with previous research. Creasy and Jarvis (1994) note that, "if a child's parents are experiencing increased perceptions of stress or poor personal functioning...such experiences might in turn negatively influence the behavioral development of the child. Conversely, behavioral disorganization involving the child might, in turn, have an impact on parental stress perceptions" (p. 423). Unfortunately, this further complicates our efforts to understand the family stress-child behaviour cycle.

A number of parents indicated that they felt that facets of their *children's behaviour had actually improved as a result of life stressor events* (Theme 7). "It's made them better people, more caring, and more understanding of disabilities. I think it's [the stress] been good" (Jackie). Again, it is unclear how this factor interacts with parent's ratings of child behaviour during the management of stressful life experiences.

Finally, in an examination of the above themes and issues, we can see how the stress in parents' lives, especially those stressors which do not encourage active coping, can influence children's behaviour. Viewing families through a model such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model helps us see how a parent's work related stress may, indeed, influence their children's behavioural responses. *Parents indicated that work pressures and events beyond their control were the most difficult types of stressors to manage within the family (Theme 8).* The most difficult thing about family stress is "trying to balance priorities between family life and work time...if I don't get my job done and don't do it satisfactorily, they'll be no home life" (Nathan). These work related demands, in Bronfenbrenner's systemic theory, trickle into children's experiences, and they have the potential to result in behavioural problems.

One distinction should be made regarding life experiences and parents' views of how these affect their children. A theme that continually emerged throughout the interviews was that there were two types of life events. One type directly impacts each individual in the family, regardless of their family position or age. These types of events might include a death in the family or serious illness of a family member. In these cases parents considered inclusion of the children in the stress process as imperative. "There's this level where we included Patrick after Julie died, in our family stress...we allowed him to share in it and be a part of it. We talked to both him and Susan" (Claire). However, when the problems were

considered to be “grown-up problems” (Claire), there was a different parental reaction: “financial stress is a grown-up problem, so we didn’t draw him [Patrick] into it..”(Claire). In fact, some parents believed that children should be protected from these types of life experiences. “Anything that doesn’t pertain to or does not involve the children, we try not to discuss until a time when they’re not present in the room. If it does involve them we put it in simplistic terms so they can understand and deal with it.” (Nathan). In this we see how Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model influences familial coping. That is, life events which parents feel occur inside the child's microsystem environment induce active coping responses. Parents help children manage these life events. Conversely, those life events which occur outside the child's microsystem (in their exo- or macrosystems) are deemed by parents to be "adult" concerns, and therefore, no active coping strategies are utilized. It is not clear, however, exactly how this differentiation between types of life experiences influences children's behaviour.

Parenting Strategies

Effective parenting strategies tend to facilitate active coping both in times of major life stress and in times of day to day survival (Boss, 1988). The more diverse a parent's collection of parenting strategies, the more alternatives a parent has in dealing with their children, regardless of child behaviour or stress levels. One way to facilitate the enhancement of management strategies is for parents to share with each other the strategies that they find successful. It is for this reason, that interviewed parents were asked about the strategies they utilized.

The sampled parent's strategies were compiled from interview data, and they are provided in Table 7. Of the parenting strategies expressed, the two which emerged most frequently were the importance of strong partnering and of clear, open communication within the family. Parents stated that all the other parenting strategies they utilized were contingent upon such efforts toward good communication. Open communication both between partners and between parents and children influenced everything from boundary setting and establishing consequences to the arrangement of the daily schedule. Parents found that these communication skills became especially important to utilize during times of stress. “[Communication is] more important than anything in stressful times. It’s easy when things are going great, but it’s when times are stressful that it’s the most important” (Lorne).

Table 7

Effective Parenting Strategies^a (N=5)

Parents described the things that they felt were essential to managing stress and to managing their children:

- Strong partnering and effective communication between partners.
 - Open communication with one's children about all matters.
 - Utilization of available resources e.g. counselling, printed materials, seminars, and parenting courses.
 - Active coping - pre-preparing for stress and stress management.
 - Willingness to make mistakes, and apologizing for them when having done so.
 - Boundary setting, maintenance and enforcement by parents of both child and parent boundaries. Time-outs are an example of a boundary setting strategy.
 - Being consistent with one's children
 - Learning and being willing to try new strategies
 - Teaching one's children about the family's values
 - Allowing children to be a part of family stress - particularly for issues which directly impact them.
 - Educating one's children, not only about stress, but about life in general.
 - Giving one's children choices.
 - Spending time with one's children,
 - Importance of time apart for both children and parents.
 - Use of natural and contrived consequences with one's children.
-

^aAll strategies were identified in a minimum of two interviews.

Overall, parents indicated that they were very concerned about being “good” parents. They indicated that they often sought out literature and parenting classes to learn how to be more effective parents. They also stated both that parenting is not an easy task and that, at times, they felt under-prepared in dealing with their children. “I don’t think I knew what I was doing though...whatever I’m doing it must be okay...I don’t know, twenty years from now when they’re [the children] on Oprah they’ll probably tell you something different” (Jackie).

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The impetus for this study was to develop a better understanding of the relationships between family stress and child behaviour, through a combined effort of the collection of questionnaire data and the co-construction of interviews. As with all research, the development of a better understanding of an issue ultimately leads to more questions. It is these questions that form the basis for further research. In addition, the flaws of one's study, as they become evident, help in the determination of how the next research project will be structured and developed.

The sample size in this study poses a notable limitation in the analysis of the questionnaire data. When proposed, the intent was to collect data from 40 participants. Unfortunately, this number was not realized. Future research should strive to include 20 participants for each independent variable.

As previously noted, the use of checklists with only moderate reliability is a limitation to the questionnaire portion of this study. In future studies the selection of instruments with higher reliability coefficients may help better clarify the family stress - child behaviour relationship. Furthermore, there are few existing measures which fulfil this need, and the development of such instruments might present yet another research task to be undertaken.

Future research might also reconsider the use of the Child Behaviour Checklist 4-18 year old form. Despite the extensive research on this measurement

tool, I felt that the sample children's scores seemed to cluster at the bottom of the scale. In fact, on some problems scales, the range was as small as two points. I felt that this clustering effect may have unduly influenced the study results.

The demographic make-up of the sample is also a limiting factor in the interpretation of the results as an expression of parents' concerns. Because the majority of those that participated in this study were mothers, the perceptions of fathers were not fully examined. It is possible that the perceptions of mothers and fathers differ in substantial ways. This study is, therefore, more an examination of mothers' perceptions and experiences surrounding family stress and child behaviour than an examination of parents' experiences and perceptions. Future research might attempt to collect data which is more representative of the population of parents, including a balanced number of mother and father respondents in the sample.

In light of the statistical results, parents were asked to contribute their thoughts regarding the limitations of this research project (Table 9). The most commonly raised issue was the time frame of 6 months in reference to life events. Parents felt both that this time frame was too restrictive and that it did not allow them to consider enough of their experiences in response to the questionnaires. They also found that, at times, it became difficult to respond solely to only one stressful experience; occasionally they felt themselves combining numerous experiences. Parents also indicated that the stress questionnaires were not specific

enough. In terms of more general limitations, parents suggested that individuals who are stressed are not likely to evaluate objectively either their stress or their child's behaviour. This too may have unduly affected the results of the study. Parents also felt that there would be perceptual differences between caregivers, both in terms of the impact of stressful events and also in terms of perceptions of child behaviour. They suggested that in future research, collection of data from both parents would easily solve this problem.

Future research might also undertake a longitudinal study of stress, coping and child behaviour. Such a study might eliminate the time frame issue and provide the opportunity to utilize a wider variety of measurement methods for both stress in the family and child behaviour. For example, it might be desirable to get interview and questionnaire data from multiple sources. It might also be beneficial to observe the differences in the stress-behaviour cycle in individual families as they dealt with both daily hassles and life events over a longer time period. In addition, in a longitudinal study, the data collected would not be retrospective. It would not, therefore, be fraught with the difficulties surrounding retrospective data collection, such as the accuracy of one's memory for the events and behaviours in question.

Coping and parental perceptions of stress proved to be major factors in this study. Future research might more closely examine the coping behaviours of parents dealing with both daily hassles and life events. Furthermore, a closer look

at parental perceptions in regards to stress is clearly indicated. In addition, seeking information regarding the family stress levels and child behaviour from a variety of sources would be warranted.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory suggests that there are many more influences on the child than just the family. Future research might consider addressing issues such as preschool enrollment, extracurricular activities, friends, and the role of the extended family on the child's behaviour. While the immediate family environment may be an important component for such young children, it is still not the only influencing factor. In order to better understand what individuals are bringing into their family experiences, researchers might also consider including a measure that specifically identifies work stress as an outside influence on family life.

As a result of the limitations discussed in this section, it would be inappropriate to make broad generalizations regarding stress and child behaviour to the entire population of parents with preschool children. This study, however, may allow a better understanding of the selected sample of families. As well, this study may encourage us to examine the relevance of the results to our own lives. It also might invite us to consider how we might better provide services to those families who appear to be experiencing similar situations.

Table 9

Parents Comments Regarding the Questionnaire Package

- At times it was difficult to keep separate different stressful experiences.
 - At times the stress related questions were not specific enough.
 - Stressed out individuals are likely not able to objectively evaluate their stress levels or their children's behaviour.
 - The time frame of 6 months was too constraining.
 - Different caregivers may have different perceptions of family stress and of child behaviour - for this reason in the future it might be prudent to collect data from both parents instead of only one parent.
 - Some questions on the Child Behaviour Checklist were difficult to answer.
-

Implications and Conclusions

Stress is an unavoidable and diverse component of life, and its impact is as varied as its manifestations. Research has long attempted to understand the impact of stress in our lives, both physically and mentally. A child's behaviour, although multifaceted and complex, is at least in part, a product of his/her environment. It is inevitable, therefore, that the stress in a child's environment must, in some way, play a role in the child's behaviour. Parents, teachers, child practitioners, and, most importantly, children can benefit from a better understanding of how family stress affects and influences child behaviour.

The concern that family stress may tax children's underdeveloped coping mechanisms, subsequently resulting in child behaviour problems, is not unwarranted in light of this study. It appears, in this sample, that the frequency of daily hassles is related to child behaviour in such a way that as daily hassles frequency rises, so do the number of maladaptive behaviours exhibited by children. Misbehaviour on the part of the child further exacerbates family stress, in turn contributing to further misbehaviour. This cycle has the potential to create learned behaviour patterns which could follow children into their older childhood, adolescence, and even adulthood. Bramlett, Hall, Barnett, and Rowell (1995) find that "for intervention purposes, parenting stress is important because it potentially may affect countless parent/child interactions, including daily routines and learning opportunities" (p. 158).

Through the process of interviewing and listening to the personal experiences of a number of families, a more comprehensive conception both of the stress-misbehaviour cycle and of its mediating factors, has been developed. The combined examination of the interplay between family stress and child misbehaviour may provide a more complex understanding of the impact of environmental influences in a family system.

It is my hope that the information that has been generated might provide readers with a better understanding of the family stress-child behaviour cycle. This understanding may assist parents, counsellors, and teachers in being better able both to anticipate children's reactions to the unavoidable stressors with which they live and to help them cope with both the major life experiences and the daily hassles of life. Furthermore, parents might benefit from this research through a better understanding of how their perceptions of daily hassles and life experiences influence both the coping skills they utilize and, ultimately, the way they interact with their children.

Parents in this sample should be commended for the manner in which they manage major life events. Their active coping and effective parenting appear to mediate adequately the impact of life event stress on their children. It is hoped both that parents might, through this research, become more aware of the effects of daily hassles on their children and that they might begin to implement more of

the active coping skills that they already demonstrate in their major life event management.

Research is a complicated task, and developing an understanding of human behaviour is possibly the one area of research most fraught with complexities. Continued investigation is needed to understand the interdependent relationship between our environment and our development, as growing and changing beings. The attempt to untangle the inextricably intertwined environmental influences on behaviour will be a continuing challenge for those researchers seeking to provide insight into health family development. “Was ist das Schwerste von allem? Was dir das Leichteste dünket, mit den Augen zu sehen, was vor den Augen dir liegt.” (What is the most difficult of all? That which seems to you the easiest, to see with one’s eyes what is lying before them.) (Xenien aus dem Nachlass #45) (Goethe, as cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.37).

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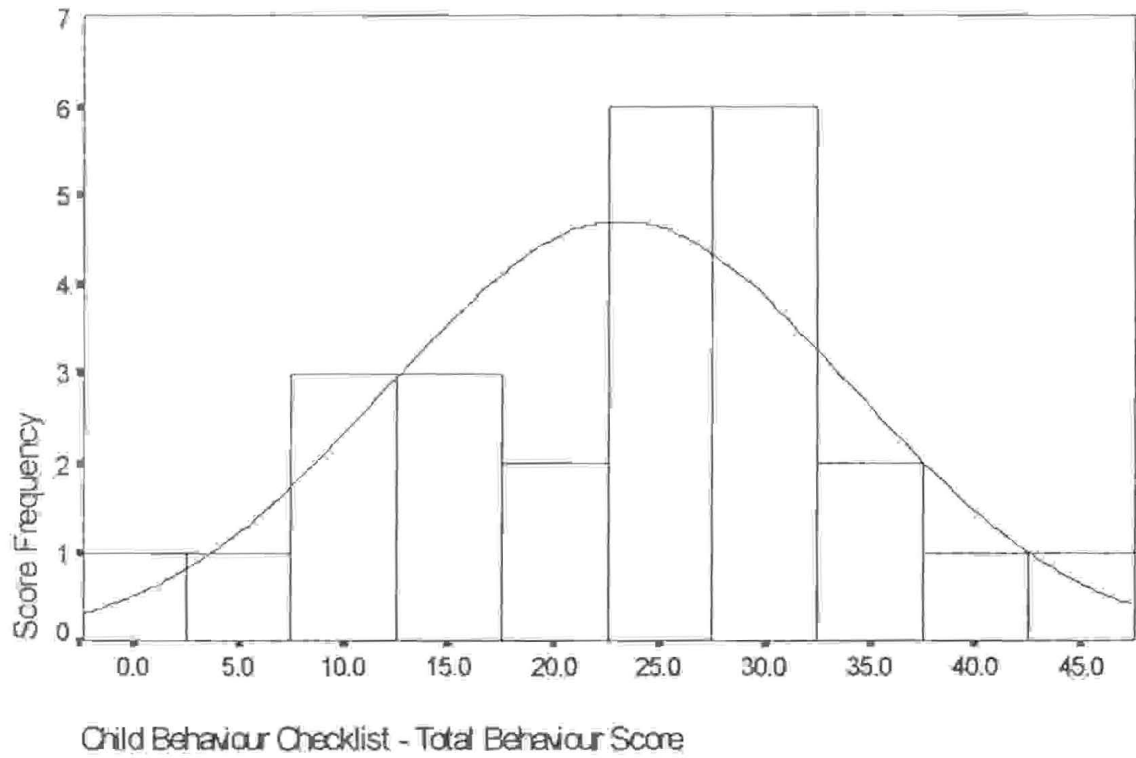
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Appendix A
Frequency Distributions

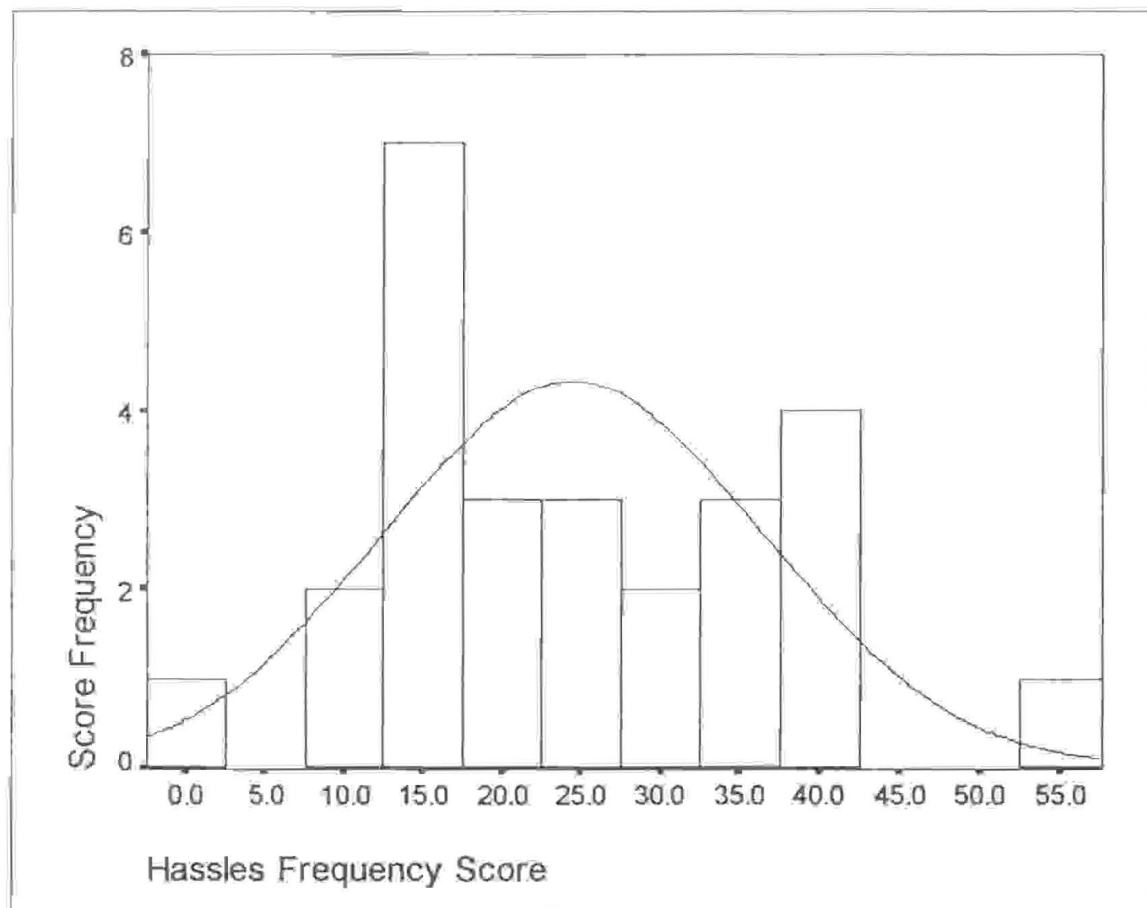
Appendix A-1

Frequency Distribution: Child Behaviour Checklist - Total Behaviour Score



Appendix A-2

Frequency Distribution: Daily Hassles Frequency Score

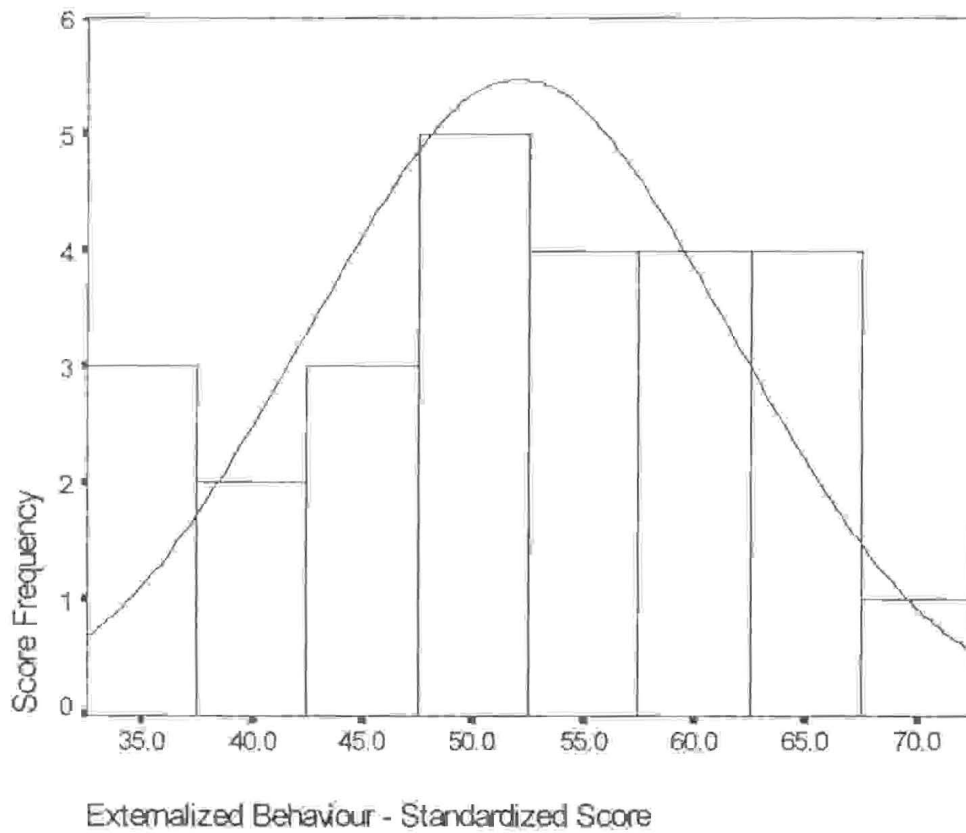


Appendix A-3

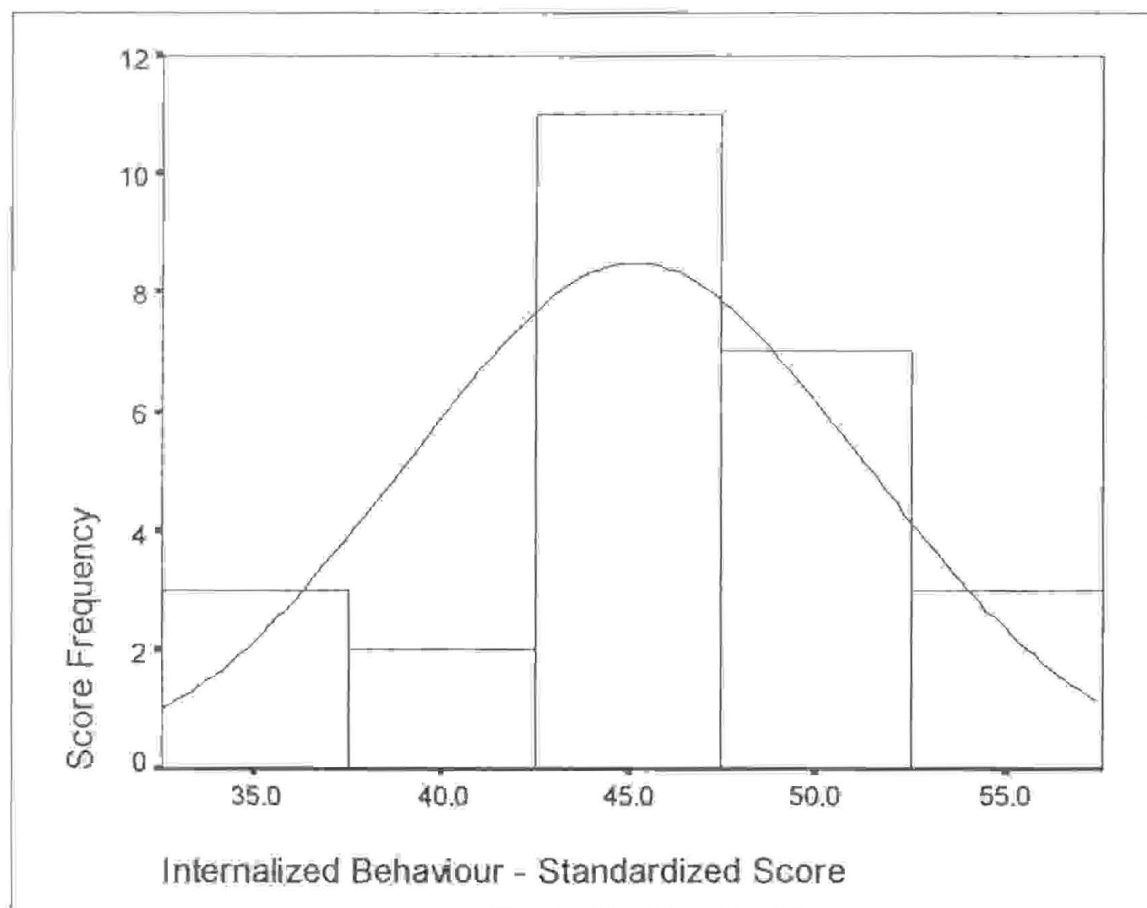
Frequency Distribution: Life Experiences Total Score



Appendix A-4

Frequency Distribution: Externalized Behaviour - Standardized Score

Appendix A-5

Frequency Distribution: Internalized Behaviour - Standardized Score

Appendix B
General Request for Participants
Instructions to Participants
and
Interview Protocol

Appendix B-1 - General Request for Participants

I am currently enrolled as a Master's student in Educational Psychology. As a part of my degree program, I am required to complete a major research project or thesis. My area of research focuses on how stress within the family unit affects the behaviour of the children who belong to that family unit.

I approach your child's pre-school, because I am looking for 40 families who's children have had their fourth or fifth birthday between July 1, 1995 and April 1, 1997. One parent from each family will be asked to devote approximately 45 minutes in the completion of 3 questionnaires. Two of the questionnaires will address the levels of stress within the family unit, and one of the questionnaires will address the 4 year old child's behaviour. All materials can be completed in your home, and then returned, in a sealed envelope, to the pre-school from which you were solicited. The project will take place sometime during the month of April. It is not necessary to have excessive amounts of family stress to participate in the study. After the questionnaire data is collected I will be asking 4-6 interested parents to participate in an interview. This interview will give the selected parents the opportunity to express their opinions on the relationship between family stress and child behaviour. Participants selected for possible interview will be contacted by telephone for further information. The interviews will take place sometime in early May.

Participation is completely voluntary, and all information will be held in strictest confidence. No names will appear on any questionnaire or interview data, all materials will be identified by a code marking identifiable only to the investigator. Consent forms will be stored separately from questionnaire data, and no one other than the investigator will have access to any questionnaire or consent form data. If you are at all interested in participating in my project, please contact me at home at 881-3840.

Thank you very much for your time,

Jennifer Lindquist

Appendix B-2 - Instructions to Participants

Thank you for participating in my study. **In order to be eligible to participate you must have at least one child that was born between July 1, 1991 and May 1, 1993.**

Enclosed please find 3 questionnaires: The Life Experiences Survey, the Hassles Scale, and the Child Behaviour Checklist. If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete the questionnaires and consent forms. If you decide that you are not interested in participating, please return the uncompleted package to your child's preschool so that it may be reused. In filling out the Child Behaviour Checklist, the child in question is your 4 or 5 year old. The questionnaires are double sided, please be sure to complete both sides of each page. All materials must be completed. Fill out and sign both copies of the consent form, then return ONE of the copies with the study materials, and keep one copy for your records. Please ensure that the consent forms contain your name, both printed and signed, and your phone number. Do not write your name on anything EXCEPT the consent forms. Neither your name nor your child's name should appear on the questionnaires. If you have any questions regarding the instructions, or regarding any aspect of the study, please do not hesitate to call me. My phone number is (250) 881-3840. When all materials are complete, return this package to your child's preschool. When the research is complete, a copy of the report will be provided to your child's preschool. Thank you very much for taking the time to review these materials.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lindquist

Appendix B-3 - Interview Protocol

Think back to a time of family stress in which you feel that your child's behaviour changed.

1. Describe the event and its circumstances to me. How old was your child at this time?
2. What effect did this event have on your family? On your child?
3. Can you describe specific ways in which you feel your child's behaviour changed?

Think back again to another time of family stress in which you feel that there was no significant change in your child's behaviour.

1. Describe the event and its circumstances to me. How old was your child at this time?
2. What effect did this event have on your family? On your child?
3. Explain to me why you think that this event and the event you spoke of previously had different effects on your child?
4. What strategies did your family use in dealing with these times of stress? Did you use different strategies for the two situations? What was most beneficial in times of family stress? What made these times most difficult?
5. If you were giving advice to other new families, what would you tell them about family stress and about managing family stress? About child behaviour?
6. Do you have any final comments about family stress and/or child behavior?

Finally, I want you to think for a moment about the task of completing the questionnaire package.

1. What did you find most difficult about this task?
2. Do you have any other comments or concerns about the checklists or questionnaire package?

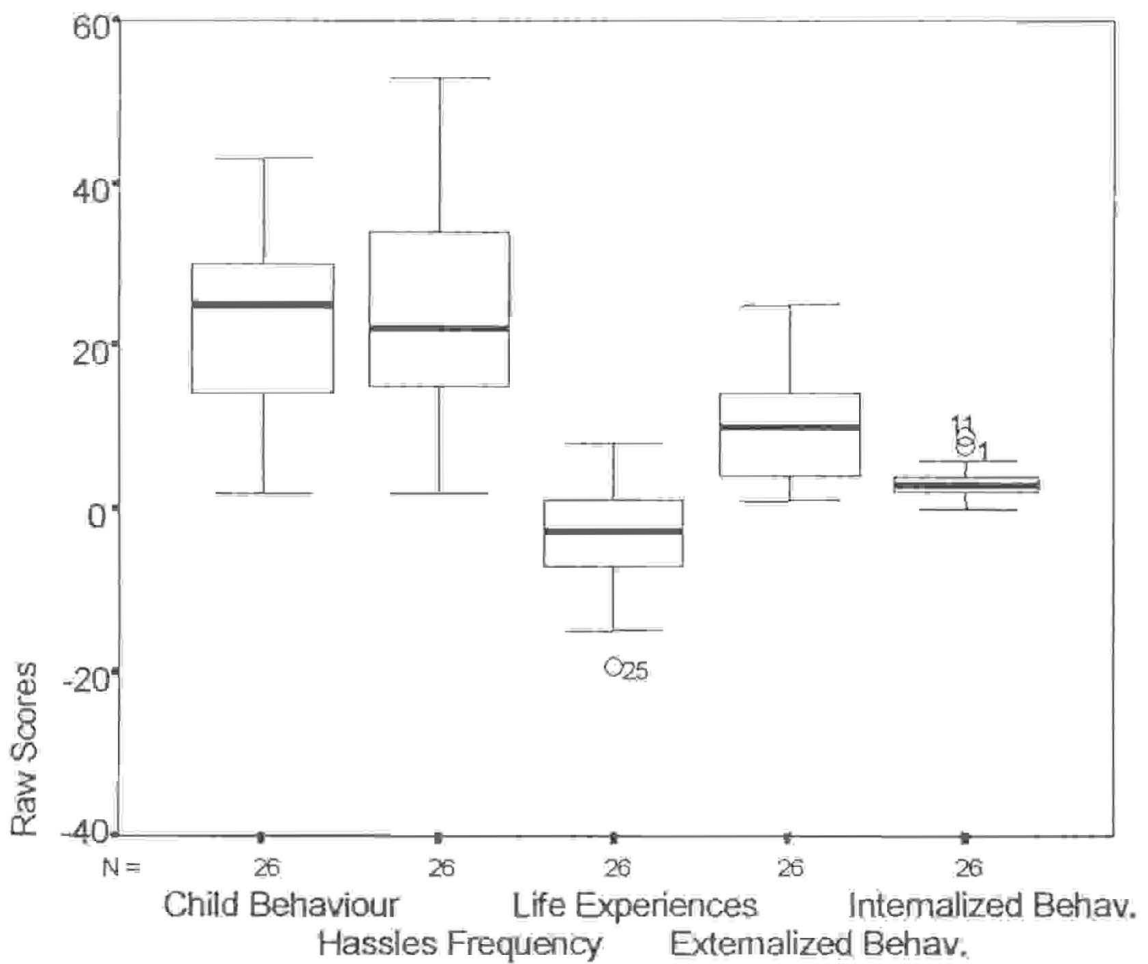
Do you think that there are any other questions that I might have asked today that would further explore family stress and child behaviour? Do you think there is anything that I should add to my questions?

Appendix C

Boxplots of Raw Scores

Appendix C

Boxplots of Child Behaviour Total Score, Hassles Frequency Score, Life Experiences Total Score, Internalized Behaviour Standardized Score, and Externalized Behaviour Standardized Score



Appendix D
Sample Consent Forms

Appendix D-1

Sample Informed Consent Form - Questionnaire Form

Family Stress and Child Misbehaviour

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in a study examining the relationships between family stress and child behaviour.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine how different levels and types of stress within the family unit affect children's behaviour

Explanation of Procedure: If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete 3 questionnaires. A time commitment of 45 minutes will be required. After completion of the questionnaires, the investigator will be seeking permission from 4 to 6 interested participants to complete a 45 min. interview which will give the selected parents the opportunity to express their opinions on the relationship between family stress and child behaviour. Participants selected for possible interview will be contacted by telephone for further information. Please indicate below if you would be willing to consider an interview at a mutually agreed upon time after completion of the questionnaires.

Potential Risks: You will be asked to assess your child's behaviour, and evaluate the level of stress in your family. Should any concerning issues arise as a result of these questions, please call Dr. Brian Harvey at his office number listed below.

Confidentiality of Data: All information which is collected will be held in confidence. Your consent form will be stored separately from your questionnaire data and the questionnaires will not contain your name.

Withdrawal from the Study: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect any present or future relationship you have with the University of Victoria or from the child care center which you have been selected. If you consent to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Offer to Answer Questions: If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. If you have any questions later you may call the investigators below. Thank you for your time and interest. If you have any additional questions concerning the rights of research participants, you may contact the investigators below.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED YOU WILL PARTICIPATE HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. AGAIN, YOU ARE FREE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY AT ANY TIME. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____ Phone: _____

Please check the box if you would be interested in participating in an interview. If you are interested, the investigator will contact you by telephone after all questionnaires have been returned.

Investigator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator(s):
Jennifer Lindquist (250) 881-3840
Masters Student - Educational Psychology

Dr. Brian Harvey (250) 721-7856
Professor - Faculty of Education

Appendix D-2

Informed Consent - Interview Form

Family Stress and Child Misbehaviour

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in a study examining the relationships between family stress and child behaviour.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine how different levels and types of stress within the family unit affect children's behaviour

Explanation of Procedure: If you agree, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview of approximately 45 minutes in length. You will be asked questions about the relationships you see between family stress and child behaviour. You may also be asked about your experiences in dealing with child behaviour and with family stress.

Potential Risks: You will be asked to examine your beliefs and experiences surrounding parenting issues, child behaviour and family stress. If any concerning issues arise as a result of these questions, you are asked to contact Brian Harvey at his office number listed below, or contact one Victoria's Family Counselors listed on the attached information sheet.

Confidentiality of Data: All information which is collected will be held in confidence. Your consent form will be stored separately from your interview data and no transcripts of interview data will contain your name. After transcription of the interviews, the original tapes will be destroyed. Excerpts from the interviews may be used in the text of the thesis around which this research is based. All identifying information will however be removed from any excerpts prior to their inclusion in the thesis.

Withdrawal from the Study: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect any present or future relationship you have with the University of Victoria or from the child care center which you have been selected. If you consent to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Offer to Answer Questions: If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. If you have any questions later you may call the investigators below. Thank you for your time and interest. If you have any additional questions concerning the rights of research participants, you may contact the investigators below:

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED YOU WILL PARTICIPATE HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. AGAIN, YOU ARE FREE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY AT ANY TIME. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____ Phone: _____

Investigator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator(s):

Jennifer Lindquist (250) 881-3840
Masters Student - Educational Psychology

Dr. Brian Harvey (250) 721-7856
Professor - Faculty of Education

Appendix E

Life Experiences Survey

Appendix E

Life Experiences Survey

Listed on the next page are a number of events which sometimes bring about change in the lives of those who experience them and which necessitate social readjustment. Please check those events which you have experienced in the last year. Be sure that all check marks are directly across from the items they correspond to.

Also, for each item checked, please indicate the extent to which you viewed the event as having either a positive or negative impact on your life at the time the event occurred. That is, indicate the type and extent of impact that the event had. A rating of -3 would indicate an extremely negative impact. A rating of 0 suggests no impact either positive or negative. A rating of +3 would indicate an extremely positive impact.

Adapted and updated from: *Sarason, I.B., Johnson, J.H., & Siegel, J.M. (1978). Assessing the impact of life changes: Development of the Life Experiences Survey. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 46 (5), 932-946.*

	Life Experiences	extremely negative	moderately negative	slightly negative	no impact	slightly positive	moderately positive	extremely positive
1.	Marriage	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
2.	Defention in jail or comparable institution	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
3.	Death of spouse	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
4.	Major change in sleeping habits (much more or much less sleep)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
5.	Death of close family member:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	a. mother	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	b. father	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	c. brother	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	d. sister	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	e. grandmother	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	f. grandfather	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	g. other(specify)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
6.	Major change in eating habits (much more or much less food intake)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
7.	Foreclosure on mortgage or loan	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
8.	Death of a close friend	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
9.	Outstanding personal achievement	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
10.	Minor law violations (traffic tickets, disturbing the peace, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
11.	Male: wife/Girlfriend pregnancy	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
12.	Female: Pregnancy	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
13.	Change in work situation (different responsibility, major change in working conditions, working hours, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
14.	New job	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
15.	Serious illness or injury of close family member:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	a. father	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	b. mother	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	c. sister	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	d. brother	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	e. grandfather	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	f. grandmother	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	g. spouse	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	h. other(specify)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
		-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

	Life Experiences	extremely negative	moderately negative	slightly negative	no impact	slightly positive	moderately positive	extremely positive
16.	Sexual difficulties	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
17.	Trouble with employer (in danger of losing job, being suspended, demoted, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
18.	Trouble with in-laws	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
19.	Major change in financial status (a lot better off or worse off)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
20.	Major change in closeness of family members (increased or decreased closeness)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
21.	Gaining a new family member (through birth, adoption, family member moving in, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
22.	Change in residence	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
23.	Marital separation from mate(due to conflict)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
24.	Major change in church activities (increased or decreased attendance)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
25.	Marital reconciliation with mate	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
26.	Major change in number of arguments with spouse (a lot more or a lot less arguments)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
27.	Married male: change in wife's work outside the home (beginning work, ceasing work, changing to a new job, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
28.	Married female: change in husband's work (loss of job, beginning new work, retirement etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
29.	Major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
30.	Borrowing more than \$27,000 (buying home, business, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
31.	Borrowing less than \$27,000 (buying car, T.V. getting school loan, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
32.	Being fired from job	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
33.	Male: Wife/girlfriend having abortion	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
34.	Female: Having abortion	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

	Life Experiences	extremely negative	moderately negative	slightly negative	no impact	slightly positive	moderately positive	extremely positive
35.	Major personal illness or injury	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
36.	Major change in social activities, eg. parties, movies, visiting (increased or decreased participation)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
37.	Major change in living conditions of family (building new home, remodeling, deterioration of home, neighborhood, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
38.	Divorce	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
39.	Serious injury or illness of close friend	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
40.	Retirement from work	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
41.	Son or daughter leaving home (due to marriage, college, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
42.	Ending of formal schooling	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
43.	Separation from spouse (due to work, travel, etc.)	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
44.	Engagement	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
45.	Breaking up with boyfriend/girlfriend	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
46.	Leaving home for the first time	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
47.	Reconciliation with boyfriend/girlfriend	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
		-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	Other recent experiences which have had an impact on your life. List and rate:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
48.	_____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
49.	_____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
50.	_____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

Appendix F
Hassles Scale

Appendix F

The Hassles Scale

Hassles are irritants that can range from minor annoyances to fairly major pressures, problems or difficulties. They can occur few or many times.

Listed in the center of the following pages are a number of ways in which a person can feel hassled. First, circle the hassles that have happened to you in the past month. Then look at the numbers on the right of the items you circled. Indicate by circling a 1, 2, or 3, how SEVERE each of the circled hassles have been for you in the past month. If the hassle did not occur in the last month do NOT circle it.

Taken from: *Kanner, A.D., Coyne, J.C., Schaefer, C., & Lazarus, R.S. (1981).*

Comparison of the two modes of stress measurement: Daily hassles and uplifts versus major life events. Journal of Behavioural Medicine, 4, 1-39.

	Hassles	Somewhat Severe	Moderately Severe	Extremely Severe
1	Misplacing or losing things	1	2	3
2	Troublesome neighbors	1	2	3
3	Social obligations	1	2	3
4	Inconsiderate smokers	1	2	3
5	Troubling thoughts about your future	1	2	3
6	Thoughts about death	1	2	3
7	Health of a family member	1	2	3
8	Not enough money for clothing	1	2	3
9	Not enough money for housing	1	2	3
10	Concerns about owing money	1	2	3
11	Concerns about getting credit	1	2	3
12	Concerns about money for emergencies	1	2	3
13	Someone owes you money	1	2	3
14	Financial responsibility for someone who doesn't live with you	1	2	3
15	Cutting down on electricity, water, etc.	1	2	3
16	Smoking too much	1	2	3
17	Use of alcohol	1	2	3
18	Personal use of drugs	1	2	3
19	Too many responsibilities	1	2	3
20	Decisions about having children	1	2	3
21	Non-family members living in your house	1	2	3
22	Care for pet	1	2	3
23	Planning meals	1	2	3
24	Concerned about the meaning of life	1	2	3
25	Trouble relaxing	1	2	3
26	Trouble making decisions	1	2	3
27	Problems getting along with fellow workers	1	2	3
28	Customers or clients give you a hard time	1	2	3
29	Home maintenance (inside)	1	2	3
30	Concerns about job security	1	2	3
31	Concerns about retirement	1	2	3
32	Laid-off or out of work	1	2	3
33	Don't like current work duties	1	2	3
34	Don't like fellow workers	1	2	3
35	Not enough money for basic necessities	1	2	3
36	Not enough money for food	1	2	3
37	Too many interruptions	1	2	3
38	Unexpected company	1	2	3
39	Too much time on your hands	1	2	3
40	Having to wait	1	2	3
41	Concerns about accidents	1	2	3
42	Being lonely	1	2	3
43	Not enough money for health care	1	2	3
44	Fear of confrontation	1	2	3
45	Financial security	1	2	3
46	Silly practical mistakes	1	2	3

	Hassles	Somewhat Severe	Moderately Severe	Extremely Severe
47	Inability to express yourself	1	2	3
48	Physical illness	1	2	3
49	Side effects of medication	1	2	3
50	Concerns about medical treatment	1	2	3
51	Physical appearance	1	2	3
52	Fear of rejection	1	2	3
53	Difficulties with getting pregnant	1	2	3
54	Sexual problems that result from physical problems	1	2	3
55	Sexual problems other than those resulting from physical problems	1	2	3
56	Concerns about health in general	1	2	3
57	Not seeing enough people	1	2	3
58	Friends or relatives too far away	1	2	3
59	Preparing meals	1	2	3
60	Wasting time	1	2	3
61	Auto maintenance	1	2	3
62	Filling out forms	1	2	3
63	Neighborhood deterioration	1	2	3
64	Financing children's education	1	2	3
65	Problems with employees	1	2	3
66	Problems on job due to being a woman or a man	1	2	3
67	Declining physical abilities	1	2	3
68	Being exploited	1	2	3
69	Concerns about bodily functions	1	2	3
70	Rising prices of common goods	1	2	3
71	Not getting enough rest	1	2	3
72	Not getting enough sleep	1	2	3
73	Problems with aging parents	1	2	3
74	Problems with your children	1	2	3
75	Problems with persons younger than yourself	1	2	3
76	Problems with your lover	1	2	3
77	Difficulties seeing or hearing	1	2	3
78	Overloaded with family responsibilities	1	2	3
79	Too many things to do	1	2	3
80	Unchallenging work	1	2	3
81	Concerns about meeting high standards	1	2	3
82	Financial dealings with friends or acquaintances	1	2	3
83	Job dissatisfactions	1	2	3
84	Worries about decisions to change jobs	1	2	3
85	Trouble with reading, writing, or spelling abilities	1	2	3
86	Too many meetings	1	2	3
87	Problems with divorce or separation	1	2	3
88	Trouble with arithmetic skills	1	2	3
89	Gossip	1	2	3
90	Legal problems	1	2	3
91	concerns about weight	1	2	3
92	Not enough time to do the things you need to do	1	2	3

	Hassles	Somewhat Severe	Moderately Severe	Extremely Severe
93	Television	1	2	3
94	Not enough personal energy	1	2	3
95	Concerns about inner conflicts	1	2	3
96	Feel conflicted over what to do	1	2	3
97	Regrets over past decisions	1	2	3
98	Menstrual (period) problems	1	2	3
99	The weather	1	2	3
100	Nightmares	1	2	3
101	Concerns about getting ahead	1	2	3
102	Hassles from boss or supervisor	1	2	3
103	Difficulties with friends	1	2	3
104	Not enough time for family	1	2	3
105	Transportation problems	1	2	3
106	Not enough money for transportation	1	2	3
107	Not enough money for entertainment and recreation	1	2	3
108	Shopping	1	2	3
109	Prejudice and discrimination from others	1	2	3
110	Property, investments or taxes	1	2	3
111	Not enough time for entertainment and recreation	1	2	3
112	Yardwork or outside home maintenance	1	2	3
113	Concerns about news events	1	2	3
114	Noise	1	2	3
115	Crime	1	2	3
116	Traffic	1	2	3
117	Pollution	1	2	3
	HAVE WE MISSED ANY OF YOUR HASSLES? IF SO, WRITE THEM IN BELOW:	-----	-----	-----
118		1	2	3

Appendix G

Listing of Victoria and Area Psychologists and Counsellors

Appendix G

Listing of Victoria and Area Psychologists and Counsellors

Access Psychological Services	- 995-0444
Caulder Marriage & Family Therapy	- 721-2000
Child and Family Counselling Assn.	- 595-4423
Choice Psychological Services Inc.	- 380-2005
Citizen's Counselling Centre of Greater Victoria	- 384-9934
Collwood Family Counselling	- 478-9525
Dr. Alison Miller and Associates	- 480-5192
Dr. Gerald Guest	- 382-4658
Dr. Lorna Popham	- 382-8172
Dr. Patricia Manning	- 360-2306
Dr. Tara Ney	- 592-1966
Family Therapy Institute of Vancouver Island	- 388-6434
Fletcher & Associates	- 383-4929
Island Psychological Services	- 592-1966
Joan McNeely	- 384-3541
Pacific Centre Family Services Assn	- 478-8357
Robert Goepfrich	- 477-3116
Rockland Family Therapy	- 380-1737
The Care Clinic	- 881-1282
Victoria Family Institute	- 721-2477
Walter & Humphrey Counselling Services	- 656-5611

*For additional listings please check the Yellow Pages under Psychologists, Counsellors, or Family Counsellors

Appendix H
Ethical Approval



University of Victoria

Human Research Ethics Committee

Certificate of Approval

Principal Investigators

Jennifer L ndquist

Grad student

Department/School

Psychological Foundations

Supervisor


Dr. Brian Harvey


Title: Family Stress and Child Behaviour

<u>Project No</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>End Date</u>	<u>Renewal Approval Date</u>
138-97	3 Apr 97	31 Dec 97	10 Oct 97

Certification

This is to certify that the University of Victoria Ethics Review Committee on Research and Other Activities Involving Human Subjects has examined the research proposal and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Subjects.


J. Howard Brunt,
Associate Dean, Research


Alex McAuley,
Associate Vice-President, Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. Extensions/minor amendments may be granted upon receipt of "Request for Continuing Review or Amendment of an Approved Project" form.

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VITA

Surname: Lindquist

Given Names: Jennifer Ella Lynn

Place of Birth: Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria 1996 to 1998

University of Regina 1989 to 1996

Degrees Awarded:

B.Ed. University of Regina 1995

B.A. (Honours) University of Regina 1996

Honours and Awards:

Saskatchewan Health Professionals Bursary Award 1996-97

Luther College Honours Psychology Student Scholarship 1995-96

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Title of Thesis:

Family Stress and Child Behaviour

Author



Jennifer Ella Lynn Lindquist
January 09, 1998