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## The relationship between family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY DAILY HASSLES  
AND FAMILY COPING AND MANAGING STRATEGIES

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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in

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by  
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## ABSTRACT

The primary focus of the study was to examine the relationship between family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies. Additionally, the three dimensions of daily hassles, time and energy involvement, positive influence, and negative influence, were investigated. Data were collected from 290 families with school-age children. Mothers and fathers completed a self-administered survey on family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies. The final sample consisted of 255 mothers (51% African American) and 128 fathers (62% White) of families with first and third grade children from a mid-sized, southern city. The findings of the study indicate that dimensions of daily hassles are important and must continue to be explored. Mothers, and fathers, reported higher than expected levels of the time and energy involvement and the positive influence of daily hassles, and lower than expected levels of the negative influence of daily hassles. The hypothesis that family daily hassles, as measured by the time and energy involvement, the positive influence, and the negative influence, are related to family coping and managing strategies was supported by correlational analysis. The three dimensions of family daily hassles were found to be stronger predictors of managing strategies rather than of coping strategies. Of the three dimensions of daily hassles, the positive influence of family daily hassles was found to be a statistically significant predictor of managing strategies for both mothers and fathers. Reframing and, especially, Spirituality were reported as used by families the most, indicating that these aspects of coping deserve attention and should be included in an assessment of coping strategies, particularly for African American families.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

U.S. families today are experiencing unprecedented change and immense pressure from the environment. Technological advances have improved the quality of family life; however, at the same time family daily life has become more complicated and more stressful. From medical research it became evident that stress can make people sick. From psychologists we have learned that stress affects people's emotional well-being and work productivity. Thus, families are challenged to cope with stress, and manage their lives, and family scientists are challenged to examine how families remain resilient despite stress (Boss, 2002; McKenry & Price, 2000).

Family stress is a "pressure or tension in the family system-- a disturbance in the steady state of the family" (Boss, 2002, p.16). Current stress theory is grounded in three primary concepts: stressors, mediators, and manifestations. Stressors are the stimuli from the environment, events or experiences that have potential to bring change in the family system (Hill, 1949). Mediators of stress are conceptualized as actions, resources, and perceptions of the family that may alter the stressful situation, and include coping resources, style and strategies. Coping resources are the economic, psychological, and physical assets that families possess. Coping styles are typical ways of approaching problems (Menaghan, 1983). Coping strategies are cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes through which individuals and families manage the stressful event or situation (Boss, 2002). Manifestations of stress, or outcomes, are the responses of an individual or a family to the disturbance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

The general area of stress and its processes has been a subject of study for more than 50 years. Initially, the study of family stress was stimulated by the Great Depression, World War II,

and the Vietnam War, accumulating an extensive body of literature (Boss, 1992). Later, family scientists shifted their attention to studying families with chronic stress and special circumstances such as families with a member with chronic illness or disability (Judge, 1998), single-parent families with adolescents (Compas & Williams, 1990), and parents' role overload (Anderson & Leslie, 1991; Kandel, Davies, & Raveis, 1985).

Stress has typically been measured by assessing the number of major life changes and events in the life of a person (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974; Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Two decades ago, however, an alternative theoretical approach to measuring stressors was proposed by Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, and Lazarus (1981) that addressed everyday minor stressors-- daily hassles. Kanner and colleagues defined micro stressors, or daily hassles, as not intense, but irritating and frustrating demands that tend to accumulate and produce stress in individuals. This view was supported by a number of studies that found evidence that daily hassles rather than major life events were more strongly related to physical and psychological health in adults (DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1982; Chamberlain & Zika, 1990; Gruen, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988; Lu, 1991).

Assessing types and levels of stress provides an opportunity to better understand how individuals and families cope with stress. The review of literature indicates that more stress theories and research studies have focused on individual stress and coping rather than family-level processes. Research on stress and coping at the family level has gradually evolved from various disciplines, and it is only recently that researchers have begun systematic assessments of whole-family responses (McKenry & Price, 2000).

The study of major life events has dominated family stress research; normative family micro stressors have been studied less extensively. Little is known about how ordinary families

cope with stressors present in their daily lives – while family members go to work, do errands, perform household chores, prepare meals, care for a child or pet, maintain the relationships with other family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Although family emotional coping with selected normative stressors of everyday family life has received some attention from researchers, few scholars have examined the cognitive managing processes in families (Garrison & Winter, 1986; Heck, Winter, & Stafford, 1992). The current study attempted to address the research gap and contribute to the understanding of contemporary U.S. families' daily stresses and their coping and managing processes.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the predictive power of family daily hassles on family coping and managing. The study investigated the relationship between family daily hassles and managing processes in families with first- and third-grade children, an understudied group. In addition, the current research project examined the three dimensions of family daily hassles as part of the relationship between family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies. The three dimensions of daily hassles that were examined include: (1) their time and energy involvement, (2) their positive influence, and (3) their negative influence.

### Hypotheses

The general hypothesis for this study is that family daily hassles, as measured by the time and energy involvement, the positive influence, and the negative influence, are related to family coping and managing strategies.

### Delimitations

The following delimitations guided the interpretation of results, conclusions, and recommendations:



1. The data are from a non-probability sample. Volunteer participants from a larger study investigating family stress and children's cognitive development completed a parental survey from which the data are taken.
2. The sample is geographically limited to families with children in first and third grade in East Baton Rouge Parish. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is restricted.
3. The present study focuses only on such stressors as daily hassles, and does not consider other stressors such as major life events or chronic strains, nor does it test the relationship between stressors and manifestations of stress.

#### Assumptions

There are several assumptions that guide the proposed study:

1. It is assumed that fathers did not complete the survey mailed to the mothers and vice-versa.
2. It is assumed that the mothers' and fathers' responses are truthful and represent the actual behaviors and experiences in their homes. It is also assumed that the respondents used a family focus in their completion of the survey.
3. It is assumed that there are no order effects between the Family Daily Hassles Inventory, Family Coping Strategies Inventory, and Family Management Strategies Inventory.
4. It is assumed that families studied do not have any extraordinary circumstances such as a family member with physical or mental disability.

#### Definitions

1. Daily hassles- (a) day-to-day interpersonal relationships or aspects of routines that have an impact on individual and family life (Malia et al., 1987); (b) irritating, frustrating, and

distressing demands that to some degree characterize everyday transactions with the environment (Kanner et al., 1981).

2. Coping strategies- reactions to family goals, events, and circumstances that involve the use of psychological and social resources (Garrison, Malia, & Molgaard, 1991).
3. Managing strategies- proactive responses to family goals, events, and circumstance that involve the use of intellectual and material resources (Garrison et al., 1991).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Individuals that belong to families do not resolve their stress problems independently; they are influenced by the stress experienced by other members of the family (Kaplan, Smith, Grobstein, & Fischman, 1973). Previously, stress was assessed primarily from the viewpoint of an individual; stress, however, is perceived differently on individual versus family levels. Pearlin and Turner (1987) acknowledged that more is known about the stress that individuals experience in the family than is known about families under stress, which was the goal of some early stress research (Hill, 1949). In the following pages, the review of literature will begin with theoretical background of the stress research and then will continue into the discussion of stressors and mediating resources.

#### Theoretical Background

Family stress research began during the 1930s, and Reuben Hill is considered the father of family stress theory for providing an exploratory direction to scientific investigations. Hill's (1949) research on war-induced separation and reunion was the first conceptualization of family stress theory. Two of Hill's contributions that have been the most lasting are the ABC-X model and the "roller-coaster model" of family crisis. In these models, Hill outlined a set of major variables and relationships among them that have remained almost unchanged since then. In the ABC-X model, "A" stands for a provoking event or stressor, "B" represents the resources or strengths that the family has at the time of the event, "C" comprises the meanings that the family attaches to the event,

either individually or collectively, and “X” represents the degree of stress associated with the event (Hill, 1949).

McCubbin and Patterson (1983) expanded the traditional ABC-X model into the Double ABC-X model by adding the concepts of coping strategies, family efforts to acquire new resources, changes in family definitions of the situation, pile-up of stressors and strains, and family adaptation as an outcome of the coping attempts. The term stress “pile-up” refers to the stress that family experiences from several changes that occur simultaneously because family rarely deals with single stressor, but rather with several stressors that emerge over time. Therefore, instead of single stressor event A, there is a pile-up of the previous stressors and hardships (A,a,a...) experienced by the family that influence the current one. The same thing occurs with resources, existing and new (B,b,b,b...) and perceptions (C,c,c,c...). Family coping and adaptation also are determined by previous experiences. The pile-up concept of family-life stressors and strains is important in predicting family adjustment over the course of family life. Social scientists have hypothesized that an excessive number of life changes and strains occurring within a brief time are more likely to disrupt a family.

Boss (1987, 2002) further developed stress theory by proposing extended conceptualization and adaptation of Hill’s work. She offered a contextual model of family stress and coping with an accent on the importance of family values and beliefs. The ABC-X factors were placed in the context of broader environmental influences such as culture, religion, economy, and history, with emphasis on the importance of perception.

## Family Stressors

A stressor or stressor event is an occurrence that has the potential to provoke change in the family system because it disturbs its equilibrium (Hill, 1949). The general understanding in the stress literature is that a stressor is not synonymous with the state of stress; it is a neutral stimulus that may or may not produce change in the family equilibrium and cause stress depending on resources and perceptions that the family system holds (Boss, 2002; Hill, 1949; McCubbin, et al., 1980; Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullan, 1981).

Previous stress research has concentrated on two categories of the stressors in families: (1) major life events such as the death of a relative, divorce, or family relocation, and (2) chronic stressors such as poverty, unemployment, or discrimination (Blonna, 1996). It was believed for some time that major life changes are associated with stress in individuals (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974). Major negative life events like the death of a loved one, divorce, or loss of a job, as well as positive life events like marriage, birth of a child, or winning the lottery cause imbalance in the organism and require readjustment, thus producing stress (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). The Social Readjustment Rating Scale developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967) was widely used to measure stress in individuals by counting the scores assigned to these life events.

This approach, however, had two major problems. First, the majority of empirical studies did not find significant correlation between major life events and health outcomes. Second, using life events to measure stressors ignored the role of perception of the event by an individual (Blonna, 1996). Perception is one of the most important concepts in the stress theory (Hill, 1949; Boss, 1992). Therefore, the life events scale's

underlying assumption that all people respond to the stressful events in the same way and its disregard of people's perceived ability to cope with it stimulated scientists to search for other ways to assess stressors and processes that mediate health outcomes. One such alternative was to examine ongoing everyday stressors in the lives of people (DeLongis et al., 1982). Several researchers have examined daily stressors but they have typically limited themselves to a particular stressor such as noise (Glass & Singer, 1972), commuting in rush hour traffic (Novaco, Stokols, Campbell, & Stokols, 1979), sex role conflicts (Pearlin, 1975), or work overload and underload (Frankenhaeuser & Gardell, 1976). Fewer studies have attempted to examine a broad spectrum of everyday stressors that characterize a person's everyday interactions with their environments: Cason (1930), Lewinsohn and Talkington (1979) and Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, and Lazarus (1981).

Two decades ago a new concept of relatively minor stressful events or daily hassles emerged. In a pioneering study, Kanner et al. (1981) conceptualized hassles as "irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that to some degree characterize everyday transactions with the environment" (p. 3). Examples of hassles are annoying problems such as losing or misplacing things, being stuck in traffic jams, inclement weather, arguments, disappointments, and financial and family concerns. Hassles' counterparts, daily uplifts, were introduced as well. Kanner et al. (1981) defined daily uplifts as "positive experiences such as joy derived from manifestations of love, relief at hearing good news, the pleasure of a good night's rest" (p. 6).

Kanner and his colleagues (1981) developed the Hassles Scale (HS) as a measure of minor daily stressful life events. Employing the HS they studied the broad range of daily hassles of middle-aged adults during a 10-month period. It was found that daily

hassles were a better predictor of psychological symptoms than major life events, thus providing evidence that minor stressors may be important in studying the relationships between stressors and health. The assessment of daily hassles versus estimation of scores on major life events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967) is congruent with scholars' agreement on the importance of perception in the stress process (Boss, 2002; Lazarus, 1984), since it accounts for a person's subjective perception of each particular event at a specific time or situation and actually reveals what happens in a person's day-to-day living.

There are a number of critical articles (DeLongis et al., 1982; Dohrenwend et al., 1984; Lazarus, 1984; Rowlison & Felner, 1988), however, concerning the confounding issue of Kanner's Hassle Scale: does it measure daily hassles or outcomes such as health (physical illness, trouble relaxing, sexual problems). Despite some shortcomings, the concept of "hassles" expressed by the items in the HS such as grocery shopping, meal preparation, traffic jams, caring for pet, misplacing things, and the weather, convey the mundane realities of daily life that may be annoying and stressful when experienced cumulatively (Wheaton, 1999). Eventually, Kanner's Hassle Scale (1981) was revised and many scholars argue that confounding is not sufficient to account for the relationship found between daily hassles and health (Rowlison & Felner, 1988).

The revised versions of the Hassles Scale are widely used by many scholars to assess daily hassles (Holm & Holroyd, 1992). The findings of those studies provide further empirical support that daily stressors rather than major life events are better predictors of physical and psychological health and stress among adults (Chamberlain et al., 1990; DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988; Gruen et al., 1988; Lazarus, 1984; Lu, 1991; Wagner, Compas, & Howell, 1988). The daily hassles inventory used in the

current study was designed intentionally to avoid confounding; in addition it assesses dimensions of daily hassles (Norem, Garrison, & Malia, 2001).

A review of the literature indicated that researchers investigated daily hassles and coping strategies of specific categories of individuals: low-income single mothers (Johnsonius, 1997; Parece, 1998), mothers of young children (Hanline & Daley, 1992) or parents of children with disabilities (Judge, 1998; Lusting, 2002), fathers' hassles (Fagan, 2000), parents' stress (Peterson & Hawley, 1998), elderly people (Harper, Schaalje, & Sandberg, 2000; Holahan, 1987; Okun, Melichar, & Hill, 1990), and caregivers of a family member with dementia (Kinney & Stephens, 1989). Other researchers studied daily hassles and coping of children (Band & Weisz, 1988), college students (Cinelli & Zeigler, 1990) and adolescents (Diuglio, 2001; Seldman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell, & Comtois, 1995). Patterson and McCubbin (1987) offered an interesting integration of individual coping theory and family stress theory, thus providing the foundation for the development of a coping instrument to assess adolescent coping behaviors and style.

Alpert and Culbertson (1987) compared daily hassles and coping strategies of dual-earner and non-dual earner women. These researchers used a modified version the Hassles Scale (Kanner et al., 1981) to assess hassles, and a shortened version of the Ways of Coping Checklist (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) to assess coping strategies. The results of the study indicate that dual-earner women reported significantly more hassles than non-dual earner women, even though no significant differences were found on the intensity level of hassles. In addition, both groups reported using more problem-focused coping strategies than emotion-focused coping strategies.



The majority of empirical studies of daily hassles, however, concentrated on individuals' daily hassles; little research has specifically focused on the normative stressors of everyday family life - family daily hassles. The present study examined the most typical daily hassles in the lives of contemporary U.S. families. Findings of a number of studies reported differences in hassles across individuals (samples of students, middle-aged adults, health professionals, single mothers, older students) reflecting their particular interpersonal and social context (Chamberlain et al., 1990; Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, & Novacek, 1987). In the present study, family daily hassles were assessed by the Family Daily Hassles Inventory (Norem et al., 2001) which included hassles common to the majority of U.S. families. In addition, the DHI allows examining the three dimensions of daily hassles: (1) time and energy involvement, (2) positive influence, and (3) negative influence, as recommended by Kanner and his colleagues (1981) for future studies.

#### Mediating Resources

The ways in which people cope with stressful situations is the most significant mediating factor in determining consequences of stress on their health (DeMarco, Ford-Gilboe, Friedemann, McCubbin, & McCubbin, 2000). A family is uniquely organized to carry out its stress-mediating responsibility and is in a strategic position to do so (Kaplan et al., 1973). One of the primary reasons why scientists study stress processes is to understand and identify why some families develop positive, adaptive meanings of the stressors and how they eventually cope with them, while other families do not. Two prevalent mediating resources are coping and managing strategies.

## Coping

As McCubbin and his colleagues (1980) mentioned in their decade review of family stress and coping, previous coping research with the family focus has depended upon, and has drawn heavily from, cognitive psychological theories (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and sociological theories (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Cognitive psychological theories refer to the ways in which individual family members alter their subjective perceptions of stressful situations. Sociological theories of coping emphasize a wide variety of actions directed at either changing stressful conditions or alleviating distress by manipulating the social environment. There are some discrepancies and a number of various opinions on how scholars identify and conceptualize the term “coping”, because some of the scholars use the concept of “coping” as a broad term that comprises a wide range of variables (Boss, 2002; Burr & Klein, 1994; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Menaghan, 1983; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have identified coping as any attempt or effort to manage a situation that has been appraised as potentially harmful or stressful. There are two general forms of coping: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping includes active problem-solving like seeking social support, making efforts to change a situation or the behavior of others, reconsidering one’s attitudes, and developing new skills and responses toward the situation. Emotion-focused coping includes efforts to manage emotional distress by controlling one’s feelings, blaming oneself for the situation, wishing the problem would go away, denying, or detaching from the situation. Many cognitive psychological studies indicate that

problem-focused coping reduces stress whereas emotion-focused coping contributes to increased levels of stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1986).

Pearling and Schooler (1978) refer to coping as “behavior that protects people from being psychologically harmed by problematic social experiences” (p. 2). These scholars identified three major types of coping by the nature of their functions: (1) responses that change the stressful situation (e.g., negotiation in marriage, punitive discipline in parenting), (2) responses that control the meaning of the problem after a stressor occurs but before a stress hits (e.g., positive comparisons, selective ignoring), (3) management or control of stress after it happens, or attempts to minimize the discomfort (emotional discharge vs. controlled reflectiveness, passive forbearance vs. self-assertion, or optimistic faith).

McKenry and Price (2000) summarized that families cope with stress by employing any of the three types of strategies: (1) direct action (e.g., acquiring resources, learning new skills), (2) intrapsychic forms of coping (e.g., reframing the problem, denial, detachment), and (3) controlling emotions produced by the stressor (e.g., professional counseling, keeping a diary, social support, use of alcohol). DeMarco et al. (2000) refers to Friedman’s (1995) idea that coping is imbedded in family processes, and that coping represents the entire family process as it unfolds day after day. Thus, coping is not a response to a stimulus but rather a series of strategies of the entire family system and its members used to respond to changes within or from the environment.

Menaghan (1983) argues that it is important to distinguish among three categories of coping variables: coping resources, coping styles, and coping efforts. She defines coping resources as the available resources that include attitudes about the self (esteem,

mastery, ego-strength), attitudes about the world (sense of coherence, belief in mastery), intellectual skills (cognitive flexibility, analytic abilities, knowledge), and interpersonal skills (communication skills, competence). Coping styles are “generalized coping strategies, typical habitual preferences for ways of approaching problems” (Menaghan, 1983, p. 159). Examples of coping styles are withdrawal, denial, optimistic comparisons, selective inattention, restricted expectations, being active or reactive, blaming oneself or somebody else. And, finally, coping efforts are the specific actions that are taken in situations in order to reduce stress or the problem (e.g., appraise the problem, express or inhibit emotions, begin a new activity, ask for help, or refuse to think about it). The definition of coping and managing strategies used in the present study’s is most closely related to what Menaghan (1983) classifies as coping efforts.

Boss (2002) similarly distinguishes between family coping resources and family coping strategies. A family’s coping resources are its “individual and collective strengths at the time the stressor event occurs” (p. 88). Examples of coping resources include economic security, health, intelligence, job skills, proximity of support, spirit of cooperation, relationship skills, network, and social supports. Coping strategies are processes, behaviors, or patterns of behaviors that families go through to adapt to stress. She emphasizes that both the individual and the family as a whole are involved in the coping process, and that the family is not coping functionally if a single member manifests distress symptoms. Thus, Boss’s definition of family coping is a cognitive, affective, and behavioral process by which individuals and families manage stressful situation with no detrimental effects for any individual in that family.

The present study is guided intentionally by neither cognitive psychological nor sociological theories of stress and coping, but rather by family stress theory (Boss, 2002; Hill, 1947) and family resource management theoretical framework (Deacon & Firebaugh, 1988; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Therefore, Boss's definition of coping strategies is used to examine coping strategies utilized by the families in their everyday lives to mediate the influences of daily hassles. The studied family coping strategies include humor, social support, spirituality, reframing, and outside help.

The only disagreement with Boss's conceptualization of coping lies in her suggestion to view coping as an outcome, and to call it managing to avoid confusion (Boss, 2002). The data collection for the current study was based on the propositions that coping and managing strategies are two fundamentally different ways of handling the stressor situation. Coping involves the use of psychological and social resources, whereas managing involves the use of intellectual and material resources in response to family goals, events, and circumstance (Garrison, Malia, & Molgaard, 1991). Both coping and managing by no means are viewed as outcomes, rather as throughputs in the family resource management model of input-throughput-output as conceptualized by Deacon and Firebaugh (1988). Therefore, the focus of the present study was on the relationship between stressors and mediators. Family health status or depressive symptoms may be considered an outcome; however, it is not the focal point of the study.

### Managing

Based on the family resource management framework (Deacon & Firebaugh, 1988; Bubolz & Sontag, 1979), scholars differentiate between coping and managing processes. Managing, according to Garrison and her colleagues (1991), is defined as

“proactive responses to family goals, events, and circumstance and involves the use of intellectual and material resources” (p. 11). Managing has a proactive focus and future orientation, while coping, as mentioned before, involves the use of psychological and social resources and implies a passive, reactive response, and past or present orientation (Garrison et al., 1991). The data collection and analysis in the current study were guided by these two conceptualizations of family reactions to the stressor event, daily hassles.

To provide a comprehensive and holistic view of the stress management processes, Garrison and colleagues (1991) and Dollahite (1991) propose the integration of concepts and models from family stress theory and family resource management into one unique model explaining how families deal with the challenges of daily life. More specifically, Deacon and Firebaugh’s (1988) conceptual model of family resource management (inputs-throughputs-outputs) is compared and contrasted, and eventually integrated with the Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan, and Mullan (1981) conceptual model as an example of family stress theory (stressors-mediating resources-manifestations of stress) .

Although the theories come from different fields – family resource management from home economics, and family stress theory from psychology, family sociology and medicine – they share many concepts in common (sometimes bearing different names). The constructs from both theories not only correspond to each other, but also contribute to one another. Therefore, Garrison et al. (1991) and Dollahite (1991) argue that individually each theory has a narrow focus and applicability, and suggest that bridging them into one model would strengthen the explanatory power of the two theories. It is hoped that by following this suggestion and examining family managing and coping

strategies, the current study will present a holistic view and uncover how families deal with their daily hassles using both emotional and cognitive aspects while trying to overcome everyday life challenges.

In contrast to the more voluminous literature on coping, few empirical studies of managing, that is planning and implementing the plan, exist, and those are mostly in the home economics and family resource management literature domain. Garrison and Winter (1986) studied the managerial behavior of families with preschool children, and found that reported family managerial behavior is more a function of family type than socioeconomic-demographic characteristics.

Heck, Winter, and Stafford (1992) examined managerial behavior of home-based workers, and revealed that, given a choice, the dual-manager may choose to consciously organize the paid work instead of family work. Another contribution of this study, more pertinent to the present research, was a development of a survey instrument to assess managerial behavior. This questionnaire represents the most recent, and, considering the elusive nature of family management process, the most successful attempt by family resource management scholars to measure family managing behavior. The questionnaire from this cooperative regional research project, NE-167, on family resource management (Heck et al., 1992) was used to assess family managing strategies in the present study.

Garrison and Hira (1992) examined the effect of daily hassles and mediating effect of reported managerial behavior, family adaptability and family cohesion on family health. Using a comprehensive family resource management model, they established that family health is influenced strongly by the three dimensions of daily hassles, time and energy involvement, positive influence, and negative influence. However, the influence

of daily hassles on family health symptomology is not mediated by the transformations of managerial behavior, family adaptability, and family cohesion. These researchers were the first to study the three dimensions of daily hassles with the newly developed daily hassles inventory (Norem et al., 1988). They found that the three dimensions of daily hassles influence the measures of transformations and family health differently, and pointed to the need to further examine the dimensions of daily hassles. In addition, and perhaps more relevant to the present study, a significant positive relationship was found between the positive influence of daily hassles and reported managerial behavior. The researchers were cautious about interpreting this finding because the relationship between stressors and transformations had not been explicitly studied.

#### Summary

There is a rich body of empirical knowledge of major stressors and of coping as a mediator of stress in individuals. There is little research, however, on normative stressors of everyday family life (daily hassles) and coping of families as a unit of analysis. In addition, there are few empirical studies that would examine the managing processes in families as they struggle to adapt to the demands of daily life and try to meet their goals. Therefore, the present study on family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies endeavored to fill a gap in the scientific literature.

As Garrison and Hira (1992) note, the relationship between stressors and mediators has not been explicitly studied. We do not know based on theory or sufficient empirical knowledge, the direction of the relationship between stressors and coping and managing strategies. For example, it makes intuitive sense that families experiencing higher degrees of daily stress would in turn use more coping and managing. On the other



hand, families experiencing high degrees of stress may not be able to use more coping and managing strategies because the stress is more than a family system can handle through coping and managing. Therefore, it was hypothesized that family daily hassles are related to family coping and managing strategies.

The principal distinction of the current study from previous work was a focus on the family perception of stressors, rather than on socioeconomic-demographic characteristics and somewhat atypical family circumstances as predictors of stress. Almost 75 years ago symbolic-interactionist theorist Thomas (1928) indicated that if family members define things as real, they are real in their consequences. Similarly, the C factor (definition the family makes of the event) is emphasized in the ABC-X model of family stress (Hill, 1949; Boss, 2002). Therefore, the underlying assumption of the study was that regardless of family characteristics, such as its structure, age, education level, race, income, and occupation of its members, families are alike in that they all experience micro-stressors in their daily lives. It is how family members perceive events, however, that seems to determine their coping and managing strategies, and, eventually, the levels of stress and crisis in families. Thus, it was hypothesized that the three dimensions of daily hassles – perceived time and energy involvement, negative influence and positive influence of daily hassles – influence family coping and managing strategies.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships among family daily hassles and family managing and coping strategies. Family daily hassles, as well as families' managing and coping strategies, were assessed using a self-report questionnaire. The data set used in this study is a part of a larger project, "Family stress and children's development within and across time," conducted by Dr. Garrison for the Louisiana Agricultural Experimental Station and Louisiana State University. The general purpose of the larger project was to longitudinally investigate the relationship between family stress processes and children's cognitive development. In the proposed study, inferential statistics was used to investigate the relationship between family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies.

#### Participants and Sampling

The hypothesis in this study was tested using data previously collected during the course of the "Family stress and children's development within and across time" project. Following the Institutional Review Board approval, the sample for the larger project was generated by inviting participation from all public and private elementary schools in East Baton Rouge Parish. In late 2000, permission was secured from 19 public schools to recruit first and third grade children and their families from a medium-sized Southern city in the U.S. From these 19 schools, parental permission was received from 431 families. A parental survey assessing internal family processes, including family daily hassles and managing and coping strategies, as well as socioeconomic-demographic characteristics, was mailed to each participating family in January 2001. Families were offered a compensation of \$25.00 for their participation in the study. Parental surveys were returned from 290 families (278 mothers and 143 fathers) with a response

rate of 67%. Prior to data analysis, a number of respondents were eliminated if they did not complete any part of the questionnaire on family daily hassles, coping, or managing strategies.

The final sample was comprised of 255 mothers and 128 fathers.

### Description of the Sample

The majority of the mothers or female legal guardians (in all cases either a grandmother or aunt) were African American (51%) or White (43%); the remaining 11 mothers were either American Indian, Hispanic, or Asian. The ages of the mothers or female legal guardians ranged from 20 to 61 years of age (mean age = 35,  $SD = 6.67$ ). The majority of the mothers or female legal guardians (66%) were married or cohabiting. About 43% of them had attended some college or trade school and most of them (67%) were employed, with the majority working full-time (at least 40 hours per week). Slightly more than 27% of the mothers or female legal guardians reported an annual household income of between \$20,000 and \$40,000. Therefore, a typical female respondent would be an African American, 35 years old, married or cohabiting, with some college or trade school education, employed full time, with income between \$20,000 and \$40,000. Compared to the residents of the catchment area, the mothers of the current study are typical.

As for the fathers or male legal guardians, 62% were White and 32% were African-American; while the remaining fathers or male legal guardians were American Indian, Hispanic, or Asian. The ages of the fathers or male legal guardians ranged from 21 to 68 years old (mean age = 38,  $SD = 7.25$ ). The vast majority of them (88%) were married. About 39% of them had attended some college or trade school and most were employed full time (96%). Slightly over 30% of the fathers reported a household income of between \$20,000 and \$40,000 and another 29% reported a household income of between \$40,000 and \$60,000. Thus, a typical male

respondent would be White, 38 years old, married, with some college or trade school education, employed full time, with income between \$20,000 and \$60,000. Compared to the residents of the catchment area, the fathers of the current study are not typical with respect to race and income.

### Instruments

A self-administered parental questionnaire was developed for use in the larger study. Parts of the survey included measures of the three primary constructs addressed in this study: family daily hassles, family coping strategies, and family managing strategies. From the survey, the following assessments are of interest for the present study: (a) the Family Daily Hassles Inventory (FDHI) (Norem et al., 2001), (b) the Family Coping Strategies Inventory (FCSI) (Garrison, Pierce, & Tiller, 1997), and (c) ten items on family managing strategies from the NE-167 regional project on family resource management (Heck et al., 1992).

#### Family Daily Hassles

Family daily hassles were measured by Family Daily Hassles Inventory (Norem et al., 2001). The 23 items in the inventory represent ongoing aspects of daily family life, such as childcare or school-related matters, household chores, transportation and traffic, family financial matters, work duties, community and church involvement, and relationships. Respondents completing the FDHI indicated the intensity to which the daily life of their family is affected by each item's dimension: time and energy, negative influence, and positive influence. The six possible responses for each dimension are a *great deal*, *a lot*, *moderate*, *slight*, *none*, or *not applicable*.

### Family Coping Strategies

Family coping strategies were assessed by the Family Coping Strategies Inventory (Garrison et al., 1997). FCSI is a 22-item self-report assessment with a family-level focus that was developed after existing coping strategies assessments were evaluated. The FCSI is designed to measure five aspects of coping: Humor, Social Support, Spirituality, Outside Help, and Reframing. The directions stated, “The following are ways of reacting to a difficult situation. Circle the response that best describes how often you and your family engage in these activities when a difficult situation is encountered...” The five possible responses for each dimension are *most of the time*, *usually*, *occasionally*, *seldom*, or *never*. The items representing different families coping strategies were computed into five subscales.

### Family Managing Strategies

Family managing strategies were measured by the ten items on family managing strategies from the NE-167 regional project on family resource management (Heck et al., 1992). These items represent the most recent attempt by family resource management scholars to measure family managing behavior. In the survey, the directions stated, “Below are several statements that describe family activities. How often does your family perform these activities...” Examples of statements are as follows: “Each week your family decides some way to improve its life”, “Before starting a job, your family has a firm idea about how to judge the outcome”, “When a job is done, your family thinks about how well they liked the results.” The five possible responses are *most of the time*, *usually*, *occasionally*, *seldom*, or *never*. Items representing families managing strategies were summed into a single index.

### Analysis of the Data

To examine the relationships among the three dimensions of family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies, the data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies analyses were employed to verify that the data were normally distributed. Theoretical means were used to interpret the results of descriptive statistics because normative scores for the variables used in the study do not exist. The theoretical means were created by summing the possible scores and dividing by the numbers of items for each variable.

Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted to check for the relationships between the independent variables (three dimensions of family daily hassles) and dependent variables (family managing and coping strategies). Five multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the influence of the three dimensions of daily hassles: time and energy, negatively perceived daily hassles, positively perceived daily hassles on the family coping strategies represented by five subscales: Humor, Social Support, Spirituality, Reframing and Outside Help. Another multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the influence of the three dimensions of daily hassles: time and energy, negative influence and positive influence of daily hassles on the family managing strategies summed into a single index. The data from the mothers and fathers will be analyzed separately for two reasons: (1) there were a considerable number of single mothers, and (2) Harring, Hewitt, and Flett (2003) have argued that analyzing the data separately for men and women helps to avoid problems resulting from the dependence between husbands and wives.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter contains the results of the data analysis. The findings from descriptive statistics are presented first, followed by the results of the correlational analysis. Multiple regression analyses results will end the chapter. The results of the mothers' data will be presented first, followed by the results of the fathers' data.

#### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) of all items of the Family Daily Hassles Inventory (Norem et al., 2001) are presented in Table 1 (mothers) and Table 2 (fathers). All variables were normally distributed; none showed significant skewness. Tables 3 and 4 contain the descriptive statistics for the items of Family Copying Strategies Inventory (Garrison et al., 1997) and the family managing strategies items from the NE-167 regional project (Heck et al., 1992), respectively.

#### Family Daily Hassles Reported by Mothers

Of the variables representing the three dimensions of family daily hassles, the means of the time and energy involvement items ranged from minimum of 1.95 (pet care) to a maximum of 4.51 (relationship with children), the means for negative influence items ranged from a minimum of 1.33 (pet care) to a maximum of 2.95 (family financial matters), and the means for positive influence items ranged from a minimum of 1.89 (pet care) to a maximum of 4.51 (relationship with children).

Of the items from the time and energy involvement dimension, the five most distressing hassles were relationship with children, child care or school-related matters, household chores, relationship with parents, and work duties. The five least distressing

items from the same dimension are: pet care, home repairs, relationship with neighbors, relationship with in-laws, and yard work.

Of the items from the negative influence dimension, the five most distressing items were family financial matters, household chores, child care or school-related matters, work duties, transportation and traffic. The five least distressing items from the same dimension are: pet care, relationship with in-laws, relationship with neighbors, relationship with spouse, and relationship at work.

Of the items from the positive influence dimension, the five least distressing items were relationship with children, child care or school-related matters, relationship with parents, relationship with brothers/sisters, and use of leisure time. The five most distressing items from the same dimension are: pet care, home repairs, car care, yard work, and household paperwork.

The items of each dimension were summed into individual indices so that three variables were computed. The theoretical range for the three dimensions of daily hassles is from 0 to 115 with a theoretical mean of 57.5. The actual time and energy involvement index ranged from 37 to 106 with a mean of 69.86 and standard deviation of 13.91. The actual negative influence index ranged from 10 to 114 with a mean of 48.42 and standard deviation of 22.88. The actual positive influence index ranged from 29 to 112 with a mean of 71.11 and standard deviation of 16.14. These results indicate that mothers reported higher than expected levels of the time and energy involvement and the positive influence of daily hassles, and lower than expected levels of the negative influence of daily hassles.



Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Family Daily Hassles Reported by Mothers (n = 255)

Item	Time & Energy Involvement		Negative Influence		Positive Influence	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Household chores	3.61	.97	2.72	1.34	3.36	1.11
Meal preparation	3.37	.96	2.33	1.38	3.45	1.02
Errands	3.29	1.02	2.26	1.16	2.96	1.02
Home repairs	2.54	1.21	2.04	1.23	2.32	1.30
Yard work	2.63	1.38	1.90	1.30	2.48	1.46
Housing	3.06	1.44	1.95	1.41	2.65	1.54
Car care	2.67	1.13	2.07	1.26	2.47	1.34
Transportation and traffic	3.18	1.32	2.43	1.36	2.67	1.44
Family financial matters	3.39	1.16	2.95	1.30	3.09	1.35
Household paperwork	3.01	1.14	2.24	1.21	2.49	1.30
Child care or school-related matters	3.85	1.16	2.51	1.52	3.75	1.27
Pet care	1.95	1.68	1.33	1.37	1.89	1.75
Work duties	3.53	1.21	2.49	1.45	3.07	1.38
Use of leisure time	3.29	.99	2.11	1.23	3.67	1.02
Community and church involvement	3.37	1.27	1.94	1.40	3.64	1.34
Relationship with spouse	3.07	1.86	1.84	1.70	3.29	1.93
Relationship with children	4.51	.70	2.35	1.74	4.51	.82
Relationship with parents	3.56	1.52	1.98	1.61	3.74	1.49

(table continued)

Relationship with in-laws	2.60	1.64	1.66	1.43	2.86	1.77
Relationship with brothers/sisters	3.51	1.24	2.17	1.57	3.70	1.30
Relationship with friends	3.31	.99	1.92	1.27	3.56	1.12
Relationship with neighbors	2.55	1.14	1.71	1.18	2.85	1.30
Relationship at work	2.91	1.40	1.88	1.38	2.89	1.52

### Family Daily Hassles Reported by Fathers

Of the variables representing the three dimensions of family daily hassles, the means of the time and energy involvement items ranged from minimum of 2.09 (pet care) to a maximum of 4.24 (relationship with children), the means for negative influence items ranged from a minimum of 1.37 (pet care) to a maximum of 2.86 (family financial matters), and the means for positive influence items ranged from a minimum of 2.03 (pet care) to a maximum of 4.361 (relationship with children).

Of the items from the time and energy involvement dimension, the six most distressing were relationship with children, relationship with spouse, work duties, child care or school-related matters, household chores, and family financial matters. The five least distressing items from the same dimension are: pet care, relationship with neighbors, car care, home repairs, and housing.

Of the items from the negative influence dimension, the five most distressing items were family financial matters, household chores, work duties, child care or school-related matters, and transportation and traffic. The five least distressing items from the same dimension are: pet care, relationship with neighbors, relationship with in-laws,

community and church involvement, relationship with in-laws, and relationship with brothers/sisters.

Of the items from the positive influence dimension, the five most distressing items were relationship with children, relationship with spouse, use of leisure time, community and church involvement, and relationship with parents. The five least distressing items from the same dimension are: pet care, household paperwork, housing, car care, and home repairs.

The items of each assessment were summed into individual indices so that three variables were computed. The theoretical range for the three dimensions of daily hassles is from 0 to 115 with a theoretical mean of 57.5. The actual time and energy involvement index ranged from 43 to 105 with a mean of 68.79 and standard deviation of 11.65. The actual negative influence index ranged from 18 to 111 with a mean of 45.77 and standard deviation of 20.34. The actual positive influence index ranged from 27 to 115 with a mean of 69.61 and standard deviation of 16.68. These results indicate that fathers reported higher than expected levels of the time and energy involvement and the positive influence of daily hassles, and lower than expected levels of the negative influence of daily hassles.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Family Daily Hassles Reported by Fathers (n = 128)

Item	Time & Energy Involvement		Negative Influence		Positive Influence	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Household chores	3.38	.90	2.52	1.15	2.95	1.24

(table continued)

Meal preparation	3.19	.94	2.14	1.15	3.12	1.14
Errands	3.16	.99	2.06	1.07	2.75	1.14
Home repairs	2.61	1.18	1.93	1.07	2.45	1.23
Yard work	2.75	1.33	1.92	1.19	2.65	1.34
Housing	2.66	1.35	1.80	1.18	2.38	1.46
Car care	2.59	1.02	2.04	1.16	2.43	1.27
Transportation and traffic	3.17	1.20	2.30	1.18	2.47	1.31
Family financial matters	3.38	.95	2.86	1.21	2.87	1.30
Household paperwork	2.82	1.06	2.13	1.16	2.26	1.24
Child care or school-related matters	3.66	1.10	2.32	1.33	3.42	1.18
Pet care	2.09	1.55	1.37	1.25	2.03	1.62
Work duties	3.70	1.02	2.52	1.17	3.05	1.26
Use of leisure time	3.39	.94	2.91	1.15	3.66	.95
Community and church involvement	3.21	1.37	1.69	1.27	3.49	1.39
Relationship with spouse	3.86	1.17	1.96	1.44	4.06	1.28
Relationship with children	4.24	.77	1.99	1.47	4.36	.87
Relationship with parents	3.29	1.30	1.83	1.37	3.63	1.36
Relationship with in-laws	2.95	1.33	1.70	1.23	3.23	1.46
Relationship with brothers/sisters	3.94	1.22	2.74	1.17	3.34	1.30
Relationship with friends	3.07	.95	1.75	1.11	3.39	1.16
Relationship with neighbors	2.53	1.07	1.57	1.03	2.28	1.20
Relationship at work	3.08	1.05	1.82	1.16	3.09	1.24

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## Family Coping and Managing Strategies

To measure family coping strategies, items were ranked according to the frequency with which a family reportedly engaged in each of the activity when encountering a difficult situation. To describe family managing strategies, items were ranked according to the frequency with which each activity was reported to be performed by the family. The respondents used a 5-point Likert scale (1= never, 2 = seldom, 3 = occasionally, 4 = usually, 5 = most of the time) to rate their behavior. The means and standard deviations for each of the item as reported by mothers and by fathers are presented in the following sections.

### Family Coping Strategies Reported by Mothers

Family coping strategies were measured by 15 items. The five items rated highest by the responding mothers were: “Seek God’s help”; “Look for something good in what is happening”; “Try to find comfort in religion”; “Pray more than usual”; “Try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive”. The five items ranked lowest were: “Seek help from community agencies and organizations”; “Get professional help”; “Try to find something comical”; “Talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem”; “Use humor”.

As designed by its authors (Garrison et al., 1997), the items of family coping strategies assessment were computed into five subscales: Spirituality, Reframing, Social Support, Humor, and Outside Help. Spirituality included three items: “Seek God’s help”, “Try to find comfort in religion”, and “Pray more than usual”. The theoretical range for Spirituality is from 3 to 15 with a theoretical mean of 7.5. In actuality, Spirituality

ranged from 3 to 15 with a mean of 12.67 and standard deviation of 2.75. This result indicates that majority of the families use spirituality more frequently than expected.

Reframing included two items: “Look for something good in what is happening”, “Try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.” The theoretical range for the Reframing is from 2 to 10 with a theoretical mean of 5. In actuality, Reframing ranged from 3 to 10 with a mean of 8.15 and standard deviation of 1.37. This result indicates that majority of the families use reframing more frequently than expected.

Social Support included five items: “Ask people who have had similar experiences what they did”, “Talk to someone to find out more about the situation”, “Talk to someone about how we feel”, “Get emotional support from friends or relatives”, and “Talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.” The theoretical range for Social Support is from 5 to 25 with a theoretical mean of 12.5. In actuality, Social Support ranged from 7 to 25 with a mean of 17.83 and standard deviation of 4. This result indicates that majority of the families use social support more frequently than expected.

Humor had three items: “Try to find something to laugh or joke about”, “Try to find something comical”, and “Use humor.” The theoretical range for the Humor subscale is from 3 to 15 with a theoretical mean of 7.5. In actuality, Humor ranged from 4 to 15 with a mean of 10.49 and standard deviation of 2.50. This result indicates that majority of the families use humor more frequently than expected.

Outside Help included two items: “Get professional help”, and “Seek help from community agencies and organizations.” The theoretical range for the Outside Help subscale is from 2 to 10 with a theoretical mean of 5. In actuality, Outside Help ranged

from 2 to 15 with a mean of 4.35 and standard deviation of 1.82. This result indicates that majority of the families use outside help less frequently than expected.

#### Family Coping Strategies Reported by Fathers

The five items rated highest by the responding fathers were: “Seek God’s help”; “Look for something good in what is happening”; “Try to find comfort in religion”; “Try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive”; and “Pray more than usual.” The five items ranked lowest were: “Seek help from community agencies and organizations”; “Get professional help”; “Talk to someone about how we feel”; “Try to find something comical”; “Talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.”

As mentioned earlier, the items of family coping strategies assessment were summed into five subscales: Spirituality, Reframing, Social Support, Humor, and Outside Help. Spirituality included three items: “Seek God’s help”, “Try to find comfort in religion”, and “Pray more than usual.” The theoretical range for Spirituality is from 3 to 15 with a theoretical mean of 7.5. In actuality, Spirituality as reported by fathers, ranged from 3 to 15 with a mean of 11.55 and standard deviation of 3.28. This result indicates that majority of the families use spirituality more frequently than it was expected.

Reframing included two items: “Look for something good in what is happening”, “Try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.” The theoretical range for the Reframing is from 2 to 10 with a theoretical mean of 5. In actuality, Reframing ranged from 3 to 10 with a mean of 7.84 and standard deviation of 1.55. This indicates that majority of the families use reframing more frequently than expected.

Social Support included five items: “Ask people who have had similar experiences what they did”, “Talk to someone to find out more about the situation”, “Talk to someone about how we feel”, “Get emotional support from friends or relatives”, and “Talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.” The theoretical range for Social Support is from 5 to 25 with a theoretical mean of 12.5. In actuality, Social Support ranged from 5 to 25 with a mean of 16.59 and standard deviation of 4.17. This result indicates that majority of the families use social support more frequently than expected.

Humor had three items: “Try to find something to laugh or joke about”, “Try to find something comical”, and “Use humor.” The theoretical range for the Humor subscale is from 3 to 15 with a theoretical mean of 7.5. In actuality, Humor ranged from 4 to 15 with a mean of 9.92 and standard deviation of 2.72. This result indicates that majority of the families use humor more frequently than expected.

Outside Help included two items: “Get professional help”, and “Seek help from community agencies and organizations.” The theoretical range for the Outside Help subscale is from 2 to 10 with a theoretical mean of 5. In actuality, Outside Help ranged from 2 to 15 with a mean of 4.30 and standard deviation of 1.86. This result indicates that majority of the families use outside help less frequently than expected.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Family Coping Strategies Reported by Mothers (n = 255) and by Fathers (n = 128)

Item	Mothers		Fathers	
	<u>M<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>SD</u>
Seek God’s help	4.48	.85	4.18	1.15

(table continued)



Look for something good in what is happening	4.19	.78	4.08	.87
Try to find comfort in religion	4.17	1.10	3.76	1.28
Pray more than usual	4.05	1.12	3.67	1.23
Try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive	3.98	.85	3.76	.89
Try to find something to laugh or joke about	3.79	.90	3.64	.93
Talk to someone to find out more about the situation	3.77	.96	3.60	.97
Get emotional support from friends or relatives	3.64	1.12	3.31	1.15
Ask people who have had similar experiences what they did	3.59	1.00	3.35	1.09
Talk to someone about how we feel	3.51	1.10	3.16	1.09
Use humor	3.51	1.07	3.34	1.09
Talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem	3.35	1.16	3.24	1.10
Try to find something comical	3.19	1.03	2.96	1.06
Get professional help	2.21	1.10	2.25	1.08
Seek help from community agencies and organizations	2.16	1.11	2.05	1.07

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<sup>a</sup>1 = Never; 2 = Seldom, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Usually, 5 = Most of the time.

### Family Managing Strategies Reported by Mothers

Family managing strategies were measured by 10 items. The means and standard deviations of managing strategies reported by mothers are presented in Table 3. The most frequently reported managing strategy was “When a job is done, your family thinks about how well they liked the results.” The least frequently reported managing strategy

was “Every week your family decided some way to improve its life.” As compared to coping strategies, the range for the items for managing strategies was smaller – from 3.10 to 4.11, rather than from 2.16 to 4.48. The majority of items for managing strategies were reportedly used “usually.”

As designed by its creators (Heck et al., 1992), the items of family managing strategies assessment were summed into an individual index. The theoretical range for this index is from 0 to 50 with a theoretical mean of 25. The actual family managing strategies index (as reported by mothers) ranged from 10 to 48 with a mean of 35.11 and standard deviation of 5.87. This result indicates that most families employ managing strategies more frequently than expected.

#### Family Managing Strategies Reported by Fathers

Family managing strategies were measured by 10 items. The means and standard deviations of managing strategies reported by fathers are presented in Table 3. The two most frequently reported managing strategy were “When a job is done, your family thinks about how well they liked the results” and “When things are not going well, your family figures out another way to do it.” The least frequently reported managing strategy was “When there is a chore to be done at home, your family waits until the last minute.” As compared to coping strategies, the range for the items for managing strategies was smaller – from 2.87 to 3.88, rather than from 2.05 to 4.18. The majority of items for managing strategies were reportedly used “usually.”

As mentioned earlier, the items of family managing strategies assessment were summed into an individual index. The theoretical range for this index is from 0 to 50 with a theoretical mean of 25. The actual family managing strategies index (as reported

by fathers) ranged from 23 to 50 with a mean of 34.72 and standard deviation of 4.99.

This result indicates that most families employ managing strategies more frequently than expected.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Family Managing Strategies Reported by Mothers (n = 255) and by Fathers (n = 128)

Item	Mothers		Fathers	
	<u>M</u> <sup>a</sup>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u> <sup>a</sup>	<u>SD</u>
When a job is done, your family thinks about how well they liked the results	4.11	.83	3.88	.92
When things are not going well, your family figures out another way to do it	3.87	.83	3.88	.76
When planning a job the plan is thought through so that the goal is clear before the job is begun	3.67	1.00	3.77	.91
Before beginning a job, your family figures out how much time, money and energy is available to devote to this particular task	3.64	1.09	3.63	1.05
As your family works, you check whether things about going as the family wants them to	3.59	.87	3.58	.79
Your family thinks about when to do a job, and not just how much time it will take	3.53	1.06	3.51	.95
Before starting a job, your family has a firm idea about how to judge the outcome	3.31	1.03	3.48	.85
When there is a chore to be done at home, your family waits until the last minute	3.24	1.01	2.87	.97
You are pleased of the work just gets done; time is not spent thinking how effectively it was done	3.11	1.10	3.14	1.03

(table continued)

Every week your family decided some way to improve its life	3.10	1.07	2.98	1.02
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<sup>a</sup>1 = Never; 2 = Seldom, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Usually, 5 = Most of the time.

### Correlational Analyses

Correlational analysis between the three dimensions of daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies were executed to assess bivariate relationships. The results of the correlational analysis of the data reported by mothers will be discussed first. The results of the correlational analysis of the data reported by fathers will conclude this part of the chapter.

#### Correlational Analysis of the Data Reported by Mothers

Significant correlations were found among 13 out of 18 computed correlations, as presented in Table 5. The time and energy involvement dimension of family daily hassles was statistically significant and positively correlated with family managing strategies and all five of the coping strategies subscales: Spirituality, Social Support, Outside Help, Reframing, and Humor. The strongest correlations were found between the time and energy involvement of family daily hassles and managing strategies, Spirituality and Social Support.

The negative influence dimension of family daily hassles was found to be statistically significant and positively correlated with Outside Help only, but not with Social Support, Spirituality, Reframing, Humor, or family managing strategies. The positive influence of daily hassles was found to be statistically significant and positively correlated with managing strategies, and all five of the coping strategies subscales:

Spirituality, Social Support, Outside Help, Reframing, Humor, and Outside Help. The strongest correlations were found between the positive influence dimension and managing strategies, Spirituality and Social Support.

Table 5. Bivariate Correlations Among the Three Dimensions of Family Daily Hassles and Family Coping and Managing Strategies Reported by Mothers

Measure	Time & Energy Involvement	Negative Influence	Positive Influence
Coping Strategies:			
Spirituality	.27**	.00	.26**
Social Support	.27**	-.04	.24**
Outside Help	.15*	.12*	.13*
Reframing	.14**	-.06	.20**
Humor	.14*	.00	.17**
Managing Strategies	.35**	.09	.39**

\*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$

The correlational analysis also revealed that time and energy involvement of family daily hassles was significantly correlated with positive influence of daily hassles (.78). These two dimensions of family daily hassles will need to be examined for multicollinearity in the subsequent regression analysis.

Correlational Analysis of the Data Reported by Fathers

For fathers, significant correlations were found among 14 out of 18 computed correlations, as presented in Table 6. The time and energy involvement dimension of

family daily hassles was statistically significant and positively correlated with family managing strategies, and all five of the coping strategies subscales: Spirituality, Social Support, Outside Help, Reframing, and Humor. The strongest correlations were found between the time and energy involvement dimension of family daily hassles and managing strategies, Social Support and Outside Help.

The negative influence dimension was found to be statistically significant and positively correlated with Outside Help and managing strategies, but not with Social Support, Spirituality, Reframing, or Humor. The positive influence of family daily hassles was found to be statistically significant and positively correlated with managing strategies, and all five of the coping strategies subscales: Spirituality, Social Support, Outside Help, Reframing, Humor, and Outside Help. The strongest correlations were found between the positive influence dimension and managing strategies, Outside Help and Social Support.

Table 6. Correlations Among the Three Dimensions of Family Daily Hassles and Family Coping and Managing Strategies as Reported by Fathers

Measure	Time & Energy Involvement	Negative Influence	Positive Influence
Coping Strategies:			
Spirituality	.36**	.09	.35**
Social Support	.40**	.08	.36**
Outside Help	.40**	.30**	.40**
Reframing	.35**	.00	.32**
Humor	.24**	.12	.27**

(table continued)

Managing Strategies	.43**	.19*	.47**
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\*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$

The correlational analysis also revealed that time and energy involvement of family daily hassles was significantly correlated with positive influence of daily hassles (.76). Again, these two dimensions of family daily hassles will need to be examined for multicollinearity in the subsequent regression analysis.

#### Regression Analyses

To further explore the relationships among the three dimensions of family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies, six separate regression analyses were performed. As previously mentioned, the items of family coping strategies assessment were summed into 5 subscales: Spirituality, Reframing, Social Support, Humor, and Outside Help. Therefore, each of these coping variables was consecutively regressed on the three dimension variables of time and energy involvement, negative influence, and positive influence of daily hassles. The results of regression analyses are presented in Tables 7 through 11. The family managing strategies summed into an individual index were regressed on the three dimension variables of time and energy involvement, negative influence, and positive influence of daily hassles. The results of these regression analyses are presented in Table 12.

#### Regression of Humor on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles

For mothers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to Humor ( $F = 2.76, p < .05$ ). Although low, the  $R^2$  is significant, indicating that 3.2% of

the variance in Humor was explained by the predictor variables (Table 7). None of the predictor variables, however, was found to be significantly related to Humor.

For fathers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to Humor ( $F = 3.41, p < .05$ ). Although low, the  $R^2$  was significant, indicating that 7.6% of the variance in Humor was explained by the predictor variables. None of the predictor variables, however, was found to be significantly related to Humor.

Table 7. Summary of Regression of Humor on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles as Reported by Mothers (n = 255) and Fathers (n = 128)

Variable	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t
Time & Energy Involvement	.01	.03	.33	.02	.09	.65
Negative Influence	-.01	-.05	-.82	.00	.02	.16
Positive Influence	.03	.16	1.57	.03	.20	1.42
Constant	8.60			6.19		
F	2.76*			3.41*		
$R^2$	.032			.076		
Adj. $R^2$	.020			.054		

\*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$

#### Regression of Social Support on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles

For mothers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to Social Support ( $F = 8.41, p < .00$ ). The  $R^2$  is significant, indicating that 9.1% of the variance in Social Support was explained by the predictor variables (Table 8). Two of the



three predictor variables were statistically significant. The time and energy involvement dimension of daily hassles was positively related to Social Support. The negative influence dimension of daily hassles was negatively related to Social Support.

For fathers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to Social Support ( $F= 8.67, p < .00$ ). The  $R^2$  was significant, indicating that 17.31% of the variance in Social Support was explained by the predictor variables (Table 10). One of the three predictor variables was statistically significant. The time and energy involvement dimension of daily hassles was positively related to Social Support.

Table 8. Summary of Regression of Social Support on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles as Reported by Mothers (n = 255) and Fathers (n = 128)

Variable	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t
Time & Energy Involvement	.07	.23	2.36*	.11	.31	2.44*
Negative Influence	-.02	-.13	-2.08*	-.02	-.08	-.92
Positive Influence	.02	.10	.32	.04	.16	1.19
Constant	12.67			7.06		
F	8.41**			8.67**		
$R^2$	.091			.173		
Adj. $R^2$	.080			.153		

\*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$

### Regression of Spirituality on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles

For mothers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly Spirituality ( $F = 7.74, p < .00$ ). The  $R^2$  was significant, indicating that 8.5% of the variance in Spirituality was explained by the predictor variables (Table 9). However, none of the three predictor variables was found to be significantly related to Spirituality.

For fathers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly Spirituality ( $F = 7.08, p < .00$ ). The  $R^2$  was significant, indicating that 14.6% of the variance in Spirituality was explained by the predictor variables (Table 9). However, none of the three predictor variables was found to be significantly related to Spirituality.

Table 9. Summary of Regression of Spirituality on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles as Reported by Mothers (n = 255) and Fathers (n = 128)

Variable	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t
Time & Energy Involvement	.03	.18	1.80	.06	.23	1.80
Negative Influence	-.01	-.08	-1.23	-.01	-.06	-.66
Positive Influence	.03	.14	1.48	.04	.20	1.47
Constant	8.93			4.84		
F	7.74**			7.08**		
$R^2$	.085			.146		
Adj. $R^2$	.074			.126		

\*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$

Regression of Outside Help on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles

For mothers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to Outside Help ( $F = 2.59, p < .05$ ). Although low, the  $R^2$  was significant, indicating that 3.0% of the variance in Outside Help was explained by the predictor variables (Table 10). However, none of the three predictor variables was found to be significantly related to Outside Help. For fathers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to Outside Help ( $F = 10.41, p < .01$ ). The  $R^2$  was significant, indicating that 20% of the variance in Outside Help was explained by the predictor variables (Table 10). However, none of the three predictor variables was found to be significantly related to Outside Help.

Table 10. Summary of Regression of Outside Help on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles as Reported by Mothers (n = 255) and Fathers (n = 128)

Variable	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t
Time & Energy Involvement	.02	.11	1.13	.04	.23	1.81
Negative Influence	.01	.09	1.38	.02	.16	1.84
Positive Influence	-.00	.02	.15	.02	.16	1.24
Constant	2.85			-.08		
F	2.59*			10.41**		
$R^2$	.030			.201		
Adj. $R^2$	.018			.182		

\*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$

Regression of Reframing on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles

For mothers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to Reframing ( $F = 4.94, p < .01$ ). Although low, the  $R^2$  was significant, indicating that 5.6% of the variance in Reframing was explained by the predictor variables (Table 11). Two of the three predictor variables were significantly related to Reframing. The negative influence of daily hassles had a negative relationship with Reframing. The positive influence of daily hassles had a positive relationship with Reframing.

For fathers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to reframing ( $F = 7.21, p < .01$ ). The  $R^2$  was significant, indicating that 14.9% of the variance in Reframing was explained by the predictor variables (Table 11). One of the three predictor variables was significantly related to Reframing. The time and energy involvement dimension of daily hassles had a positive relationship with Reframing.

Table 11. Summary of Regression of Reframing on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles as Reported by Mothers (n = 255) and Fathers (n = 128)

Variable	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	$\beta$	t	B	$\beta$	t
Time & Energy Involvement	-.00	-.02	-.16	.03	.25	1.99*
Negative Influence	-.01	-.13	-1.99*	-.01	-.15	-1.68
Positive Influence	.02	.25	2.50**	.02	.19	1.41
Constant	7.12			4.82		
F	4.94**			7.21**		
$R^2$	.056			.149		

(table continued)

Adj. R<sup>2</sup> .044 .128

\* p ≤ .05 \*\* p ≤ .01

Regression of Family Managing Strategies on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles

For mothers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to managing strategies (F = 15.49, p < .00). The R<sup>2</sup> was significant, indicating that 15.6% of the variance in managing strategies was explained by the predictor variables (Table 12). One of the three predictor variables was significantly related to managing strategies. The positive influence of daily hassles had a positive relationship with managing strategies.

For fathers, the three dimensions of daily hassles contributed significantly to managing strategies (F = 12.72, p < .00). The R<sup>2</sup> was significant, indicating that 23.5% of the variance in managing strategies was explained by the predictor variables (Table 12). One of the three predictor variables was significantly related to managing strategies. The positive influence of daily hassles had a positive relationship with managing strategies.

Table 12. Summary of Regression of Family Managing Strategies on Three Dimensions of Daily Hassles as Reported by Mothers (n = 255) and Fathers (n = 128)

Variable	Mothers			Fathers		
	B	β	t	B	β	t
Time & Energy Involvement	.05	.11	1.14	.074	.17	1.43
Negative Influence	.01	-.02	-.34	.00	.00	.01
Positive Influence	.11	.31	3.30**	.10	.34	2.70**

(table continued)

Constant	3.83	22.53
F	15.49**	12.72**
R <sup>2</sup>	.156	.235
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.146	.217

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\*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*  $p \leq .05$

As mentioned earlier, correlational analysis results indicated that time and energy involvement dimension was correlated with positive influence dimension of daily hassles (.78) for mothers, and (.76) for fathers. These two dimensions of family daily hassles were examined for collinearity in the regression analysis discussed above. The variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to test for possible collinearity. Usually, a VIF score of 4 or 5 would be an indicator of a potential problem. In all 12 regressions that were performed, the variance inflation factor did not exceed 2.6. Therefore, in our case, there is no indication of collinearity between time and energy involvement dimension and positive influence dimension of daily hassles.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies. In addition, this study examined three dimensions of family daily hassles: (1) the time and energy involvement, (2) the positive influence, and (3) the negative influence, as part of the relationship between family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies.

The data set of this study is a part of a larger project, “Family stress and children’s development within and across time,” conducted by Dr. Garrison for the Louisiana Agricultural Experimental Station and Louisiana State University. Following Institutional Review Board approval, a non-probability sample was obtained through 19 schools by recruiting 1st and 3rd grade children and their families from a medium-sized southern city in the U.S. Because the focus of this study was coping and managing strategies and family daily hassles, the sample was restricted to 255 mothers and 128 fathers of the original 278 mothers and 143 fathers. Respondents were eliminated if they did not complete any part of the questionnaire on family daily hassles, or coping and managing strategies.

The data was collected through surveying the families with the use of the following assessments: (a) the Family Daily Hassles Inventory (FDHI) (Norem et al., 2001), (b) the Family Coping Strategies Inventory (FCSI) (Garrison et al., 1997), and (c) the items of family managing strategies from NE-167 regional project on family resource management (Heck et al., 1992). Of the participants, the majority of the mothers were non-white (57%), mostly African-American; the majority of fathers (62%) were White.

Therefore, a typical female respondent would be an African American, 35 years old, married or cohabiting, with some college or trade school education, employed full time, with income between \$20,000 and \$40,000. Compared to the residents of the catchment area, the mothers of the current study are typical. A typical male respondent would be White, 38 years old, married, with some college or trade school education, employed full time, with income between \$20,000 and \$60,000. Compared to the residents of the catchment area, the fathers of the current study are not typical with respect to race and income.

### Findings

One of the purposes of the current study was to examine the three dimensions of family daily hassles: the time and energy involvement, the positive influence, and the negative influence, to better understand the phenomenon of “daily hassles” per se (Kanner et al., 1981), as well as to scrutinize what is stressful for contemporary U.S. families with school-aged children, an understudied segment of the population, and how they deal with that. The results of the current study empirically confirm our intuitive belief about what kinds of stressors tax families; such stressors are financial matters, household chores, child care or school-related matters, work duties, and transportation and traffic. Another finding is that relationship with children, child care or school-related matters, household chores, and relationship with parents were perceived by families as requiring the most time and energy. At the same time, however, these same family daily hassles (except for household chores) were perceived by families in a positive way. These findings lend empirical support to the idea that the dimensions of daily hassles are important and must continue to be explored (Garrison & Hira, 1992; Kanner et al., 1981).



Overall, it was found that mothers, and fathers, in our sample reported higher than expected levels of the time and energy involvement and the positive influence of daily hassles, and lower than expected levels of the negative influence of daily hassles. Family daily hassles reported by fathers, differ slightly from those reported by mothers in that fathers reported relationship with spouse more intensely than mothers did as requiring time and energy and having a positive influence on family.

As reported by both mothers and fathers in the current study, managing strategies were used by families much more intensely than expected. Similar results were found for the use of Spirituality and Reframing coping strategies. The items comprising Reframing, and especially, Spirituality subscale were reported as used by families the most. This finding may be explained by the sample of the current study which was mostly African-Americans and Southern, and the importance of religion and the church in coping in the lives of African Americans (e.g., Billingsley, 1992; Hill, 1971) and Southerners (e.g., Gallup & Castelli, 1989) has been well documented. The least frequently used coping strategies were Outside Help and Humor, as reported by mothers, and Outside Help and Social Support, as reported by fathers. Since this assessment of coping strategies has never been used with any other population, and its subscales are different from other existing assessments of coping strategies, no comparison can be made. The findings of this study suggest, however, that certain aspects of coping like spirituality deserve attention and should be included in an assessment of coping strategies, particularly for African American families. Overall, the findings of the current study cannot be compared to other studies because, as was noted in the review of

literature, there is very little research on normative stressors of everyday family life and coping of families as a unit of analysis.

The general hypothesis for this study that family daily hassles, as measured by the time and energy involvement, the positive influence, and the negative influence, are related to family coping and managing strategies was supported by correlational analysis. For mothers, significant correlations were found among 13 out of 18 computed correlations. The time and energy involvement dimension of daily hassles was positively correlated with family managing strategies, and all five of the coping strategies subscales: Spirituality, Social Support, Outside Help, Reframing, and Humor. Correlations ranged from .14 to .35, with the highest correlations between the time and energy involvement and managing strategies. The negative influence dimension was found to be statistically significant and positively correlated with Outside Help only, but not with Social Support, Spirituality, Reframing, Humor, or managing strategies. The positive influence of daily hassles was found to be positively correlated with managing strategies, and all five of the coping strategies subscales: Spirituality, Social Support, Outside Help, Reframing, Humor, and Outside Help. The range of correlations was from .13 to .39, with the highest correlations between the positive influence of family daily hassles and family managing strategies.

For fathers, significant correlations were found among 14 out of 18 computed correlations. The time and energy involvement dimension of daily hassles was positively correlated with family managing strategies, and all five of the coping strategies subscales: Spirituality, Social Support, Outside Help, Reframing, and Humor. The correlations ranged from .24 to .43, with the highest correlations between the time and energy

involvement and managing strategies. The negative influence dimension was found to be positively correlated with Outside Help and managing strategies. The positive influence of daily hassles was found to be statistically significant and positively correlated with managing strategies, and five coping strategies: Spirituality, Social Support, Outside Help, Reframing, Humor, and Outside Help. The correlations ranged from .27 to .47, with the highest correlation between the positive influence and managing strategies.

The results of the regression analysis indicate that the variables representing the three dimensions of daily hassles significantly predict coping and managing strategies, even though all individual coefficients were not always statistically significant. For mothers, 5 out of 18 regression coefficients were significant, for fathers 3 out of 18.

The time and energy involvement dimension of family daily hassles was positively related to Social Support, as reported by mothers. This finding suggests that the more time and energy involvement families' daily hassles are perceived to require, the more frequently families turn to Social Support. For fathers, the result of the time and energy involvement dimension of daily hassles had a similar effect, as it did to Reframing. Therefore, a possible explanation for this finding might be that when families perceive daily hassles as neutral and requiring greater time and energy involvement, they feel the need to turn to social support or try to look at the bright side of life to be able to deal with their stressors.

The negative influence dimension of daily hassles was found to be statistically significant predictor of Social Support and Reframing for mothers only. These relationships were both negative, indicating that the more negatively family daily hassles are perceived, the less Social Support and Reframing families used. A possible

explanation for this finding might be that negative perception of stressors might immobilize families, preventing them from turning to social support of extended families or friends, or seeing things in a more positive way. For fathers, however, the negative influence dimension of daily hassles was not found to be a statistically significant predictor to any of the coping strategies. Similarly, the negative influence dimension of daily hassles did not significantly predict managing strategies as reported by both mothers and fathers.

The positive influence of family daily hassles was found to be a statistically significant predictor of Reframing and managing strategies for mothers. The relationships are positive, suggesting that the more positively families perceive daily hassles, the more Reframing, and managing they use. For fathers, similarly, the positive influence of family daily hassles was found to be a statistically significant predictor of managing strategies. Therefore, a possible explanation for this finding might be that when families perceive daily hassles in a positive way, they feel empowered and able to deal with their stressors by using social support or by focusing their attention on the silver lining of clouds. These findings are analogous to those of Garrison and Hira (1992), who also found that reported managerial behavior is affected more by the positive influence of family daily hassles than by the time and energy involvement or the negative influence of daily hassles. The sample used in their study was mostly White, older, rural men and women, without children at home, whereas the sample used in the current study was mostly African-American, mostly women, younger, urban, and with school-age children. Despite the differences in populations, the results of these two study are

similar, indicating that managing strategies, and therefore, managerial behavior in families, may be predicted by the positive influence of family daily hassles.

As evidenced by the standardized regression coefficients, the three dimensions of family daily hassles were found to be stronger predictors of managing strategies rather than of coping strategies. This finding demonstrates that explanatory power of the two models utilized in the current study, family stress theory and family resource management, may be increased by using them in tandem, as proposed by Garrison and her colleagues (1991) and Dollahite (1991). Future studies should continue to explore how families deal with their daily stressors using both emotional and intellectual resources while trying to overcome everyday life challenges.

#### Limitations

The findings of this study must be interpreted circumspectly because of several limitations. First, participants for the study were not randomly selected from the population. A non-probability sample might limit the generalizability of the results. Second, because the study was conducted in mid-sized Southern city with families with children in public schools, the results might not be applicable to other geographic locations or other school systems across the country. Third, even though it was assumed that respondents used a family focus when answering the questionnaire, it must be acknowledged that respondents' individual perceptions might have taken precedence over the collective family perceptions. Fourth, low  $R^2$  in the models might possibly indicate a specification problem. This problem could be addressed by including other relevant variables to the model, such as family resources (financial, psychological, and social), multiple indicators of stressors (life events, strains and traumatic events), or outcomes

measures (family health, depressive symptoms). Finally, considering complex of stressors and coping and managing processes in families, a cross-sectional design of this study does not allow for strong inferences of causality. Therefore, relationships over time between family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies could not be addressed.

### Implications for Future Research

This study provides insight in what is challenging contemporary American families on a daily basis and what helps them to deal with those stressors. These processes can be better and more comprehensively understood when the family stress theory and family resource management theory are used together. Because the majority of the studies focus on stressors and outcomes, it is recommended that the relationship between stressors and mediators (coping and managing) need to be examined further.

Future studies might further focus on different dimensions of daily hassles to measure and describe life stress in divergent individuals, families and populations. In addition, the assessment of family perceptions needs to be improved to ensure that the family is a unit of analysis, which can be achieved by measuring individual perceptions and collective family perception. And, as Boss (1992) suggests, even an outside observer's perceptions should be measured to better assess how families construct their realities. In addition, studies designed with not only quantitative, but also qualitative methods would help better assess family perceptions.

It is recommended that future researchers do not limit themselves to standard coping questionnaires, and employ different measures of family coping strategies, such as the one used in the current study. Or, alternatively, include more items representing, for

example, religiosity to better reflect coping processes in families of different ethnicities and geographic location.

Whether stressors influence coping and managing strategies in families or the use of certain coping and managing strategies influence family stressors and their perceptions, is an inquiry yet to be answered. It can be suspected that part of the answer to this inquiry is the use and availability of resources, therefore future studies should address this issue and scrutinize family coping resources, styles and strategies as much as the bi-directional and interactive nature of family processes. Furthermore, it is suggested that these models include health data as an outcome of this relationship.

Replication of this study using a randomly selected sample is recommended because only volunteers from one parish in Louisiana participated in the study, which may have influenced the results. Future research is needed to determine the extent to which these results generalize to families of different socioeconomic status, background and geographic location. Another possibility would be for future research to investigate family daily hassles and family coping and managing strategies in a longitudinal study with daily diaries as it would allow researchers to make stronger inferences of causality.

#### Implications for Practice

The present study contributes to the understanding of families and their functioning. Family perceptions of daily hassles may be related to family coping and managing strategies. As family scientists continue to uncover the mystery of how coping and managing occurs in families and which strategies are the most effective, they will be able to identify more effective ways to help families allocate their psychological, social, intellectual and financial resources to react to stressors.

Programs and policies aimed at enhancing family life should employ a multi-disciplinary approach. Family stress programs should not be limited to teaching coping skills only as a reaction to stressful events. On the contrary, they need to equip families with proactive managerial skills by teaching them to utilize intellectual and cognitive resources. Similarly, family financial programs that primarily deal with cognitive planning, budgeting, and managing, could be enriched by incorporating an understanding and application of psychological and social resources. Programs and policies designed to improve family life can better serve their purpose by employing holistic approach that better reflects the complexity of family life in today's fast paced world.



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