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The relation of children's everyday stressors to parental stress

Gustafson, Yvonne Elaine, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1993
The Relation of Children's Everyday Stressors to Parental Stress

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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*****

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In this chapter the nature of stress and parental stress will be explored. The population chosen for the research will be discussed briefly. A problem statement will be made. Definitions will be given. Assumptions and limitations of the study will be discussed, and research questions will be stated.

Stress

The study of stress is complicated by individual differences in the experience and the perception of events. An obvious difference is that between adult and child. Losing a pencil to an adult may be little more than a minor inconvenience. However, to a child, the loss may be associated with embarrassment at not completing an assignment on time. Stress in adults can differ in much the same way. For one, an event such as job loss could be perceived as an opportunity to make a change. For another, job loss may represent failure, loss of role identity, or fear of not being able to meet future obligations. These examples help clarify the notion that stress is not
inherent in an event, but occurs as the result of perception and personal meanings attributed to the event. Therefore, it is difficult to speak of events as stressors when they are, in fact, potential stressors.

Investigations of stress began by studying biological responses, e.g., sweating in response to the physical stressor heat. More recent investigations of stress in adults and children examine more closely the role of individual perception in moderating stress. This is particularly true for psychological stress occurring as a result of interaction between the individual and the social environment (Compas, Davis, Forsythe & Wagner, 1987; Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1988; DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman & Lazarus 1982; Lazarus & Folkman, 1985). The study reported here is concerned with parents' and children's stress as they perceive it in everyday events.

Nature of parental stress

For adults, functioning as parent is one of multiple roles that are held concurrently. For example, the role of parent is often held concurrently with the roles of spouse, employee (wage earner), and extended family member. Therefore, parenting stress can be conceived of as a particular form of role strain. Role strain results from conflict between perceived role demands, personal and societal expectations of role fulfillment, and time constraints.

Models representing internal and external demands on parents continue to be revised in an attempt to understand the relative significance of a variety of parental strains. Figures 1 and 2 are
representative of early models of the interactive relationship between parents and children. Some, like the Belsky model (Figure 1), are designed to explain child outcomes assumed to be the direct result of parenting behaviors. In this model there is a strong emphasis on the developmental history and personality of the parent as well as the supportive relationships the parent maintains to effect child development. So much attention paid to characteristics of the adult in the relationship limits emphasis placed on contributing behavioral or emotional characteristics of the child.

Abidin's first model (Figure 2) shows an increased awareness of a number of child characteristics that directly contribute to parenting stress. The Parent Stress Index (Abidin, 1990, 1983) has been demonstrated to be a reliable and valid measure of parental stress as it is represented by this model. However, the current Abidin model (Figure 3, 1989), which provides the basis for the present study, has been proposed to expand and further clarify the nature of parenting stress. In it, Abidin suggests perceptions of life events and daily hassles, the troublesome events and inconveniences of the day contribute to parental stress.

Part of the daily hassles parents experience are related to meeting children's developmental needs. Popular culture has encouraged parents to perceive children's preschool and teenage developmental stages as the most trying. This view of family has been further reinforced by a number of research designs which have families of preschoolers and teenagers as their population of interest. Very young children's requirements for physical care have been
A Process Model of the Determinants of Parenting

assumed to place extreme demands on employed women, in particular (Barnett & Marshall, 1991; Bird & Ford, 1985). Teenage children, on the other hand, have been assumed to contribute to parent stress through increased demands for autonomy (Small, Eastman, & Cornelius, 1988).

The impact of preconceived expectations of children on parental stress is not of immediate relevance to the present study. The cultural concerns about preschoolers and teenagers may help explain why little information about particular stressors or the normative level of parental stress for parents of elementary school-age children is available. One of the few studies on parents of older children (Bartz, 1978) provides clues to the unique demands placed on parents of school-age children. Sixty-four husband-wife pairs were interviewed for their perceptions of parental tasks and childrearing problems for elementary school-age and teenage children. Parents of elementary school-age children were most involved with discipline and the development of values. Parents of teenagers were involved in social planning for the child's future or drug and alcohol education. Children's relations with members of the opposite sex was a concern for parents of both elementary school-age children and teenagers. Bartz' study suggests the nature of the parenting task is different for the two stages of development represented by elementary school-age children and teenagers. This would imply that the challenges and potential stressors for the parents would also be different.
One significant challenge and set of potential stressors for parents is the nature and variety of development across domains displayed in elementary school children. The concurrent biological, psychological, and social development process in which children are involved present challenges for the parent-child dyad as well as for the individual child. Although who the child is becoming has relevance to the parent-child dyad, it is to be expected that the nature of a number of the developmental tasks will involve people and circumstances over which parents have little direct control. This is particularly true of the everyday experiences of school and peers.

In addition, little is known about the impact of children's stress on parent stress. Considering that for most of recent history children were perceived as not having stress, it is not unexpected that there would be little available information about the relationship between children's and parents' stress.

**Childhood stress and the school environment**

Childhood is no longer portrayed as a time of freedom from responsibility and care. Recent investigations of childhood stress (Band & Weisz, 1988; Dickey & Henderson, 1989; Greene, 1988) indicate that children in elementary school experience a variety of stressors. They are also cognizant of their attempts to master the events they find stressful (Compas et al., 1988; Paterno, 1987; Ryan, 1989).

Pressure from the larger social context may contribute additional stressors for both parents and children. For example, the notion of "hurry up," first presented in popular press by Elkind
(1981) in *The Hurried Child*, has been identified by educators, and mental and physical health care professionals. In the school setting, curriculum materials prepared for preschool and early and middle elementary grades have increasingly sophisticated content presented to ever-younger students. Duncan (1983) points out that the environment of schools is one in which time urgency is reinforced. Promptness is rewarded and tardiness is punished. Finishing first is rewarded while finishing last is often ridiculed. Competitive use of time is not only encouraged but often taught. This would imply that for children the everyday events of school are a mixture of academic, time, and social demands. Even those children who are generally perceived as successful may experience the day-to-day events of elementary school as difficult. Therefore, learning to cope, or developing coping strategies, can be thought of as one more task which interacts with the biological, psychological, and social development of children.

A potential concern for parents is the relationship of stress, health, and long-term adaptive behaviors of children. Johnson (1986) noted that much of the research on stress had initially been done to assess the effects on adult function after which the instruments were adapted for adolescents and children. For example, identifying Type A Behavior Patterns (TABP) in adults as a correlate to coronary health was followed by studies which identified TABP in adolescents and children. The extension of these studies has resulted in a wealth of studies indicating stress, particularly that accompanying life change events such as divorce and moving, as a
factor in the physical well-being of children. For example, Hodges, Kline, Barbero, and Flanery (1984) linked chronic abdominal pain (recurrent pain without a discernable physical basis) to life stress in a group of 30 ten- and eleven- year-old children. Boyce et al. (1973) linked life stress with respiratory illness in children. Jacobs and Charles (1980) related life change events to the onset of childhood leukemia. Other studies of children with chronic health conditions such as cystic fibrosis, juvenile diabetes, and hemophilia indicate more illness episodes for children who have had higher levels of stress.

Learning ability also appears to suffer with the impact of stress. Phillips (1978) states that children have two basic responses which are debilitating to the school-aged child: Self-preoccupation and avoidance behavior. Schultz and Heuchert (1983) state that "anxiety is a predominant, subjective reaction to perceived school related psychological stress on the part of children" (p.29).

In essence, under circumstances that induce anxiety reactions in children, we can expect them to be less able to "hear" what is being said to them or asked of them; to process only a fraction of what is received, and possibly to distort that; and to respond in less robust, more primary modes of behavior to the person and/or situational expectations or circumstances that comprise the life event (Schultz & Heuchert, 1983, p. 31).

Suleiman (1992) found a significant relationship between children's daily hassles and levels of anxiety. Poor social skills were significantly related to the experience of negative life events.
Cook (1982) conducted a series of interviews with 300 students. Participants included children in elementary grades two through six, secondary grades nine through twelve, and college students who had experienced a life crisis as children in elementary years. Although reliability and validity issues were not included in the research report, the study is of interest in that all interviewees reported reading skills as most affected either in the long- or short-term.

There are those who see behavioral patterns associated with stress in children on a continuum so that child and adolescent psychopathology represents the extreme behavioral and social responses of children who fail to cope or have developed miscoping strategies (Chandler, 1985). Schultz and Heuchert (1983) suggest patterns of coping develop over time so that children have life histories that reflect the social and emotional outcomes of poorly developed coping strategies. They base their descriptions on categories devised by Quay (1972), who spoke of maladaptive or miscoping patterns which involve moving against others, moving away from others, and moving toward others.

The pattern of moving against others is characterized by assaultiveness, defying authority, and being irritable and quarrelsome. These behaviors characterize a broad response category more often known as conduct disorders.

Moving away from others as a miscoping pattern is predominantly a pattern of withdrawal. It is characterized by seclusiveness, shyness, and timidity, as well as responding with
worry and anxiety over one's own behavior. This is accompanied by feelings of inferiority, self-consciousness, and chronic sadness and may involve depression.

Moving toward others as a miscoping pattern is not to be mistaken for prosocial behavior characteristic of children with well-developed coping skills. Moving toward others has been broadly classified under immaturity. Children who have this pattern of miscoping are likely to present themselves as incompetent according to Schultz and Heuchert (1983). Their social interactions either turn off other children, or maintain a status on the periphery of the group as victims often picked on by other children.

Cummings and colleagues (Cummings & Cummings, 1988; Cummings, Pelegrini, Notarius, & Cummings, 1989; Cummings, Vogel, Cummings, & El-Sheikh, 1989; El-Sheikh, Cummings, & Goetsch, 1989) found similar response categories of children who experience background anger (conflict and violence between adults) in their environment. In addition, studies which examine the correlation between physiological characteristics and behavioral reactions to unfamiliar/cognitively challenging events (e.g., El-Sheikh et al. 1989; Kagan, Reznick, & Snidman, 1987) may reflect temperamental or biological differences in children that later become manifestations of social patterns. Gunnar (1987) suggests that judicious use of physiological measures in studying stress and coping of children may contribute to a richer understanding of various modes of expression of stress (affective, somatic, and psychological) as well as contribute to more sensitive treatment approaches. Physiological measures are
beyond the scope of the present study, however, parental perceptions of children's temperament and social patterns are relevant to understanding their impact on parental stress.

There are several other characterizations of response to stress in children. It is common to divide affective and cognitive reactions from somatic or motor responses and for older children to include responses to stress that have social ramifications such as absenteeism, theft, and alcohol consumption (Humphrey, 1988; Humphrey & Humphrey, 1985; Schultz & Heuchert, 1983; Thoresen & Eagleston, 1983; Youngs, 1985). The list of common affective and cognitive reactions is: panic; irritability; depression; agitation; worry or anxiety; dread; inattention; forgetfulness; distractibility; and sleep disturbances. Some somatic or motor responses are flushing, sweating, shallow breathing, headache, incoordination, and "freezing" or "going blank."

Brenner (1984) points out that children as young as infants will display behaviors which develop into patterns that are characteristic responses for specific stressors, e.g., encountering new experiences. Chandler (1985), Humphrey (1988) and others report patterns of coping that have become characteristic of individual children in academic and social interaction. In considering the impact of children's stress on parental stress, children's experience of stress can be thought of as a point of beginning for a series of actions and reactions. For example, acting out behaviors are often viewed as a stress response in children (Brenner, 1984; Chandler, 1985; Humphrey, 1988). Impulsive acting out serves to avoid thinking of
the past, draws attention to oneself, and may momentarily ease the physical pressure of stress. However, in interaction with peers and adults this potential coping pattern creates more problems. Therefore, children's stress can contribute directly to parental stress through the immediate physical and emotional demands of children's behavior.

Adults, however, may have sufficient experience with types of stressful events encountered by their spouse or children for those events to hold meaning for the individual independent of the other person's response to the events (Compas, Howell, Phares, Williams, & Ledoux, 1989). In the case of parents and school-age children, parental appraisal of children's daily stressors may be distressing to the parent, independent of the relation between the stressor and the response expressed by the child. Consequently, children's daily difficulties are potential stressors for parents both directly and indirectly.

**Purpose and significance of this study**

The preceding discussion suggests the child has a dual impact on parental stress which has not been explored at this point. The current parent stress models (Abidin, 1989; Belsky, 1984) from which parent stress measures are derived do not provide enough information about parental stress related to the child. The purpose of this study was to take a fresh view of parental stress for parents of elementary school-age children independent of comparison with preschoolers or teenagers. The purpose of this exploration of parental stress was to include the impact of developmental domains
that are outside direct parental control and are likely to be represented as daily hassles for the child. The significance of this study will be contribution to understanding the link between children's experiences and parental stress.

**Population of interest**

The population under consideration in this study consists of parents of elementary school-age children. These parents had children in the fourth or fourth-fifth grade classroom of a suburban school district in central Ohio.

**Problem statement**

At present, the stress models from which parent stress measures are derived do not provide enough information about parental stress related to the elementary school-age child. Therefore, the problem statement was as follows: What is the level of parental stress experienced by parents of elementary school-age children in the population? To what extent is parental stress related to children's everyday event stress?

**Definitions**

For the purposes of this study, parent of a school-age child was defined as an adult caretaker with whom the child maintained residence for a minimum of four months of the school year. The four month time limitation was stipulated to insure the participating parents had opportunity of exposure to children's everyday event stress related to the current school year.

School-age children were children currently in a fourth grade classroom in a public elementary school. Children in fourth grade
classrooms were chosen by descripers of children's development to best represent elementary school children. An expanded discussion of elementary school age children's development is provided in the review of literature.

Psychological stress occurs when the relationship between the person and the environment is appraised by the individual as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985).

Life events were occurrences first associated with negative health outcomes in adults (Holmes and Rahe, 1967). Life events were defined as major changes for the individual, such as loss of a significant other, moving, or change in economic circumstances. The concept of life events was relevant to this study in that major life events contribute to the experience of stress by increasing the frequency and intensity of daily hassles an individual may experience (Parfenoff & Jose, 1989).

Children's every-day event stress was best understood as a subset of what had been labeled daily uplifts and hassles. The study of daily hassles and uplifts was first introduced by DeLongis et al. (1982). They attempted to identify the impact of daily hassles and uplifts on psychological and somatic symptoms in adults. Daily hassles were represented by the everyday annoyances that occurred in the lives of individuals. Compas et al. (1987) found a significant relationship between daily stressors and psychological symptomatology and behavior problems in adolescents. Rowlison and Felner (1988) did not find a significant relationship between
hassles and adjustment when the teacher rated the child. However, the relationship was significant when the parent rated the child.

Assumptions and Limitations

1. It was assumed that those who lived closely with one another had affect on one another.

2. In regard to children, it was assumed that their behavior/emotion was affected by the number and intensity of hassles they experienced.

3. Parental stress was assumed to be normally distributed within a diverse school system.

4. The employee contract within the designated school district placed children's classroom participation in the study at the discretion of the teacher.

5. It was assumed that gathering intimate information from parents about the family and children resulted in self selection within the sample. Self exclusion may have occurred for parents who feared children's lack of discretion. Parents who felt discouraged by the demands of the parent role, or who felt embarrassed by some of their feelings toward their children may also have chosen to exclude themselves. The research process took time that some parents may have felt needed to be used in other ways. Generalization of results were limited by the nature of the accepting sample.

6. The present study was limited by the nature of the instruments available to assess parental and children's stress. For example, the length of the Parent Stress Index, 120 items over seven
pages, in addition to a request for demographic information and a school-related questionnaire demanded a time commitment on the part of the parent. Further, all instruments included the limitations inherent in self-report.

The major aims of the study were:

1. To explore parental stress of parents with elementary school-age children within the bounds of a diverse school district.
2. To compare differences between mothers and fathers on total parental stress.
3. To determine the relative contributions of child characteristics and daily hassles, major life events, parent characteristics, and family characteristics to total parent stress.
4. To explore the frequency and intensity of three potential developmental stressors for parents of elementary school-age children: peer relationships; developing intellectual skills; and personal autonomy.

Hypotheses

The specific hypotheses are:
H 1: Fathers will report levels of parental stress equal to that of mothers.
H 2: Parental stress will be mediated by life events, family contextual characteristics, parent characteristics, and children's gender and daily hassles.
H 3: Children's everyday stress will be related to parental stress. Further, children's frequency and intensity of daily hassles will be
predictive of parental stress beyond that accounted for by parent characteristics, major life events, child and contextual characteristics. H 4: Three potential parental stressors suggested by Havighurst, peer relationships, developing intellectual skills, and developing independence and autonomy, and supported by the review of literature will be related to measures of parental stress.

In addition the present study will explore the prevalence of daily hassles for elementary school-age children in grade four; parental characteristics such as gender, age, parenting experience, and education; and the family context characteristics of income, employment, and parental support.
Parenting Stress

Parenting stress has been viewed as primarily a women's issue. Barnett and Marshall (1991) point out that many of the major studies of stress-illness relationships in men do not even report partnership or parental status. They believe the failure to include information about partnership status and parental role status is the outcome of two assumptions. The first assumption is that the employee role is the most salient for men; second, that men's family roles are benign. There is, however, empirical evidence to dispute these assumptions. McBride (1989) found a significant inverse relationship between fathers' perceived sense of competence in parenting skills and the amount of stress they experience in the parental role. Mash and Johnson (1983) report that self esteem for both mothers and fathers, as well as maternal stress (father's stress was not measured), was related to parental perceptions of child behavior. Greenberger and Goldberg (1990) reported the impact on
parental well-being and orientation to work of children's school problems. Fathers in the study who perceived more child problem behaviors reported significantly greater role strain, depression, and health symptoms. For mothers with partners, the more frequently they reported problem child behaviors, the higher their level of role strain and depression and the lower the level of commitment to employment. For mothers without partners, perceived problem behaviors had the greatest negative effect on organizational commitment. Lewis (1989) confirmed the perception of partner support, irrespective of legal marital status, as a factor in mitigating parental role strain for African-American women. The differentiation of impact by gender and partnership status suggest the need to include partnership status and gender of the reporting parent in future research. In the present study, parent support and gender will be included in the report of parental stress outcomes.

Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, and Wethington (1989) determined that, contrary to popular notions, husbands are more likely than their wives to bring home-stress into the work place. Stress contagion, also referred to as spillover, from work-to-home was evident for both genders.

Family characteristics variables

Several family characteristics are relevant to the experience of parenting stress: Age of youngest child; number of children (Pittman, Wright, & Lloyd, 1989; Small et al. 1988); family developmental stage: preschoolers, school-agers, teenagers; maternal age; employment (Barnett, 1989; Barnett & Marshall, 1991; Baruch &
Family characteristics describe the immediate context in which parent-child interactions take place. Therefore, measures of these variables are important to understanding parental stress and will, for the most part, be included in the current study. The exception is a measure of the concept of time. In a concrete sense, each family has the same 24 hours of the day. For the purposes of this study, parenting stress related to the relative distribution of time for parenting tasks and self care are reflected in measures of parental sense of competence and depression.

**Socioeconomic Status as a Family Characteristic Variable**

Socioeconomic status (SES), a composite measure usually representing income, educational level, and professional status, is a difficult issue in parent stress research. Intuitively, low educational achievement and economic strain would be assumed to contribute to or exacerbate already existing parent role strain. Incidents of reported child abuse are often associated with low SES; however, it has been increasingly suggested that the association is related to
family use of public health care (Hamner & Turner, 1985; Kempe, 1976) rather than an actual higher rate of child abuse in families of low socioeconomic status (Fontana, 1973; Gil, 1970). The most extreme cases of child abuse in which children are placed in alternative care are strongly associated with multiple personal and material adversities (Abidin, 1989; Belsky, 1984; Belsky, Hertzog, & Rovine, 1986; Quinton & Rutter, 1984). This is also true in cases of repeated child abuse (Browne, 1988).

A further difficulty in parent stress research related to SES is the power ascribed to socioeconomic status in determining specific parenting behaviors. Consider, for example, the fact that SES has been claimed as a primary determinant of family interaction (Gecas, 1979). On the other hand, Jackson, Tucker, and Bowman (1982) describe SES as having little utility for the study of African-American families. Lewis (1989) suggests that total household income as a measure of varying liquid resources is a more viable alternative to SES in exploring the impact of economic role strain on parent stress. Consequently, in the present study, SES will not be used as a composite measure of economic strain. Instead, total annual income, employment, and educational level will be entered separately into the analysis.

In the preceding discussion of family characteristics, there are several characteristics of the family related particularly to the child or children, e.g., child's age and birth order. This suggests that parental stress is in part a response to the development and stress the children bring to the parent-child relationship. However, the link
between parental stress and related symptoms is less than clear. Preliminary exploration by Compas et al. (1989) indicate the relation between major life events and symptoms was mediated by daily stressors for parents and their children ages 10 to 14. Further, parents are not always informed or cognizant of the stressors children experience. Yamamoto (1979) first noted the discrepancy in children's and adults' perceptions of major life event stressors. More recent studies (Corsello, 1987; Ifekwunigwe, 1985) found consistently low correlations between parental perceptions of children's stress and children's self-reported levels of stress. Understanding is further complicated by the nature of the outcomes in the two studies. In the Ifekwunigwe study, parents consistently perceived the children as having lower levels of stress than the children perceived themselves as having. The opposite was true in the Corsello study in which parents perceived their children as being under considerably more stress.

The contradictory nature of the results of these studies are consistent with the notion that the relationship between children's stress and parental stress can be both direct and indirect. For the families in which children are perceived as being under little stress, it is likely that any contribution of outside child stress to parent stress would be indirect. That is, it would be stress in the parent-child dyad that is perceived by parents as being related directly to the behavior and interaction displayed by the children. On the other hand, for those parents who believe children are experiencing significant stressors, parental stress would be attributed in part to
parental perception of children's stress. Therefore, in the present study there will be an attempt to measure parent interpretation of children's stressors as well as derive a measure of children's everyday life events stress.

Child attribute variables relevant to the study of stress and resilience in children

Age, gender, temperament, and intellectual capacity are consistent factors in the study of stress in children. Honig's (1986a, 1986b) review of literature confirms these variables with the addition of premature birth for preschool children. It is important to note that the relative contributions to stress resilience of child and caregiver variables changed from childhood to adolescence, as did the discriminating power of biological, ecological, and interpersonal variables (Werner & Smith, 1982). The shift in relative importance of protective factors is congruent with the development of the individual and the experience of a larger social context for older children (Maccoby, 1983; Rutter, 1983).

Age

Age is often used to infer developmental level. Age is relevant, therefore, to particular types of stressful events for children. For example, the types of response to divorce seen in young children varies distinctly from responses displayed by older children (Hetherington, 1989; Rutter, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975). Very young children display grief reactions which appear milder and of shorter duration than older children. However, further study suggests that long-term consequences are more likely to occur as a
result of frequent changes in caregivers, maternal response and coping, and the potential effects of poverty. Older children, on the other hand, may show more signs of immediate distress which persist for a longer period; yet, due in part to more developed cognitive skills and a larger social context, find and utilize resources to help alleviate the negative impact of the divorce. For the purposes of the present study age will be represented by grade level of the participants. Fourth grade students average 9 to 11 years of age.

**Gender**

Outcomes by gender for prepubescent children are consistent. Boys appear to be more vulnerable across a range of stressors (Bower, 1986; Rutter, 1983). Using again the experience of divorce as an example, Hetherington (1989) reported that two years after divorce the majority of parents and children were adapting reasonably well. Girls were functioning well and had positive relationships with their custodial mothers. Boys, on the other hand, showed more antisocial behavior, more acting-out, and more coercive and noncompliant behaviors at home and school. They also had more difficulty with peer relationships and school achievement.

Humphrey and Humphrey (1985) suggest that differences by gender may in part be dependent on basal metabolism rate which is higher for early elementary boys. The inability to "be still" may invite more negative response from adults in the environment, whether at home or school. The potential for boys to inadvertently invite negative response from adults both outside and in the home indicates that child gender is particularly relevant to parental stress.
Reporting by gender of child and parent will be included in the present study.

**Genetic Factors**

Rutter (1983) cites several studies which indicate a genetic vulnerability to criminality. Recent literature also suggests a genetic link in the development of alcohol abuse problems. Genetic predisposition may render children more vulnerable to adverse family and societal environmental conditions. Genetic markers for vulnerability to long-term personal and social problems are beyond the scope of the present investigation.

**Temperament**

Children with easy temperaments are more likely to avoid negative criticism in the parent-child relationship. They are also more likely to have larger support networks with peers and other adults in the environment than those children who have difficult temperaments (Brenner, 1984; Garmezy, 1983; Rutter, 1979). Therefore, temperament characteristics may play an important part in the individual-environment interaction across situations. However, there is some indication that temperament is not an immutable characteristic. Of the nine elements of temperament studied in preschoolers--activity level, rhythmicity, approach-withdrawal tendencies, adaptability, intensity, sensory threshold, quality of mood, distractibility, and persistence--only activity level did not show a significant relationship to parent behavior (Cameron, 1977). In the present study, child temperament characteristics will
be incorporated in the research design through the instrument selected as a measure of parental stress.

**Intelligence and cognitive style**

Intelligence interacts with the school environment in supporting academic success, which in turn is associated with self-esteem. However, a reflective cognitive style associated with impulse control can indicate learned behavior rather than an attribute. In either case, intelligence, reflective cognitive style, and impulse control have been shown across studies to interact as protective factors for children (Garmezy, 1983; Neuchterlein, 1970; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982). In the present study, normal intelligence and impulse control will be assumed through the selection process.

**Children's development over the elementary school experience**

The role for parents with children who are attending elementary school is complicated by the often over-lapping, simultaneous, and inconsistent patterns of growth across a variety of domains that have been described for children 6- to 12-years-old. Among the relevant domains are cognitive development (Piaget, 1960), social/friendship development (Selman, 1975), moral development (Kohlberg, 1973), and psychological ego development (Erikson, 1963). Individual development in any one of these domains functions in interaction with development in each of the other domains. For example, the stages of moral development described by Kohlberg incorporate the cognitive processes which allow a child to move from egocentrism to sociocentrism, i.e., Piaget's
theory; to understand friends and the nature of friendship, i.e., Selman's conception; and to make decisions about one's efficacy in interaction with environment, i.e., Erikson's psychosocial conception of development. Similar arguments can be made for each primary domain and the developmental tasks with which they are associated. In Table 1, a brief description of the developmental domains of elementary school-age children is provided.

The grade indicators are approximate. They are guidelines suggested by the norms for transition indicated in each of the theoretical domains under consideration. However, the unevenness of development within and across domains suggests that a sample of children presently in the fourth grade, averaging between 9- and 11-years-of-age, would provide adequate representation of developmental stages across the elementary school experience.

Havighurst (1972) lists the variety of developmental tasks across domains particularly relevant to elementary school-age children. The tasks which he identified are inclusive of those proposed by Piaget, Erikson, Selman, and Kohlberg. In Table 2, Havighurst identifies the relevant factors, which he called agents, principally involved in supporting children's growth with developmental tasks.

Havighurst's decision to exclude the family as an agent principally involved in children's tasks of learning to get along with age-mates, developing intellectual skills, and becoming independent of parents and other adults, is contrary to indications of relevant
Table 1. Parallel development domains as described by Piaget, Erikson, Selman and Kohlberg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Piaget</th>
<th>Erikson</th>
<th>Selman</th>
<th>Kohlberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-1</td>
<td>1. Preoperational</td>
<td>3. Initiative vs. Guilt</td>
<td>Stage 0 Egocentric</td>
<td>1. Obedience-punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(The outcome</td>
<td>(Chooses friends because of the way they</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>associated with</td>
<td>look, their proximity, and their material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>positive resolution</td>
<td>possessions.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of this stage is a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sense of Purpose.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>2. Concrete</td>
<td>4. Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
<td>Stage 1 Subjective perspective</td>
<td>Stage 1 continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>operations</td>
<td>(The positive outcome of this stage is a</td>
<td>(Friends are people who do what you want</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sense of Competence.)</td>
<td>them to do.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>2. Concrete</td>
<td>4. Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
<td>Stage 2 Self-reflective</td>
<td>Stage 2. Hedonism, concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>operations</td>
<td>(Fies operate continues)</td>
<td>perspective (Others are friends if they</td>
<td>reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>agree to play the same game or work on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the same project)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(The positive outcome of this stage is the</td>
<td>(Friends can have different points of view,</td>
<td>accord, Conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capacity for Fidelity.)</td>
<td>can argue and still remain close)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (Adapted from Kohlberg, 1987)
Table 2. Agents Principally Involved in Tasks of Middle Childhood and Adolescence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Peer Group</th>
<th>Other Media</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Religious Group</th>
<th>Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To get along with age-mates</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learning an appropriate masculine or feminine role</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing basic intellectual skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Choosing and preparing for an occupation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Developing attitudes toward social groups and social institutions</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Becoming independent of parents and other adults</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Developing conscience and moral judgment</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Forming a system of ethics and a scale of values</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

potential concerns of parents of elementary school children included in this chapter. This contrary evidence would indicate a dilemma for parents who experience these areas not as potentially disturbing, but currently relevant to themselves and their children.

It is likely that Havighurst identified a unique set of potential parental stressors. This set of child development tasks are stressful to parents precisely because parents by their role have significant interest in the child's successful completion of these developmental tasks. However, due to the nature of the tasks, parents have little direct control over either the process or individuals represented by the peer group and school institution. Further exploration of this unique set of stressors is one purpose of the present investigation of parental stress.

Children's everyday school experience as potential for parent concern/Havighurst's unique set of potential stressors

School represents a significant part of the child's life. For the early school child it may represent half of each waking day. In those school hours the child is in interaction with peers, teachers, and other support staff who are involved in reflective appraisal. Through their collective reflective activities they inform the child of his/her individual identity and personal value within the system. It is believed that self appraisals develop through role-taking in which people come to see themselves as they think significant others see them (Felson & Zielinski, 1989). Therefore, the developing self-appraisal sustains the cumulative impact of reflective appraisals
offered the child not only from parents, but also from peers and teachers.

Peers as significant others

Garnica (1981) used the term omega children to refer to children who have very low standing in the social dominance hierarchy of the classroom. The omega status of these children had clear negative impact on the quantity and quality of child-child interaction. For the kindergarten children in the study, the number of conversational partners and frequency of social interaction were attenuated for these children. The qualitative approach to one portion of the study demonstrated the lack of reciprocation on the part of peers. An event adults could regard as insignificant, e.g., denied being next to use a particular coloring tool after actively requesting, is indicative of a pattern of discounting omega children experience.

The results of the Garnica study are consistent with similar studies by Strayer and Strayer (1975) with three-to five-year-olds, Ginsburg, Wauson, and Easley (1977) with third- through sixth-grade children, and Williams (1975) with adolescent boys (cited in Garnica, 1981). In each of these settings, omega children were victims of isolation/rejection by peers. This is of particular concern in that rejected children are at risk for a variety of later behavior problems, including dropping out of school, delinquency, neurosis and psychosis, depression, and even suicide (Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988).

Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, and Gariepy (1988) studied the social networks of aggressive children. Overall, aggressive students
were less popular and more actively disliked than their peers; however, they reported themselves as popular as controls in the study. In addition, there were no differences in the groups in the number of occasions they were named as best friend by a peer. Analysis of the social organization for these children show that at fourth grade other aggressive children provided the social network for boys, and by seventh grade it was true for both boys and girls. In other words, these children had learned behaviors and formed associations which provided a particular social context as well as social support for themselves. The consequences of affiliation in known aggressive groups are the negative encounters that can be expected with authority figures in the home and outside the family. This is another indication of the impact of school on the individual that has significant implications for the family.

Although the children studied by Garnica were not victims of overt aggression, there are children who experience victimization from peers in the school environment. Perry et al. (1988) reported the stable propensity of these children to be victimized. The chances of being singled out for abuse do not decrease with age. Overt physical abuse declines with age; however, verbal abuse remains high for all ages. Even at higher grades, verbal abuse is often associated with physical abuse.

It is also the case that victimized as well as aggressive children are disliked by their peers. Victimized children have patterned responses which affect the probability and level of attack against them. For example, being perceived by the aggressor as deliberately
provocative is one pattern. At the other extreme, these children can fail to emit signs that normally inhibit aggression like showing signs of pain, using an appeasing posture, or assuming facial expressions which would indicate they will not be pushed around. The failure to display behavior patterns that inhibit aggression is also associated with victims of child abuse which takes place in the home. At this point, the link between victimization at school and home is not fully understood. However, children's horizontal (child-to-child) relationships and behavior in school have been linked to their vertical (parent-to-child) relationships (Poag, 1989).

*The parent in developing intellectual skills and personal autonomy*

Parent-child interaction can either mediate or exacerbate the issues of children in the school social context. Grolnick and Ryan (1989) contend that parent practices are associated not only with achievement per se, but also with the development of attitudes, motives, and self-evaluative outcomes that facilitate negotiation of the social and cognitive demands of school. Dornbush, Ritter, Liederman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987) performed an extensive exploration of the relationship between parenting practices and academic success. Nearly 8000 students across a variety of ethnic, socioeconomic, and family structures support the general trend that authoritative parenting techniques were associated with academic success. To explore this further, Steinberg, Elmen, and Mounts (1989) sought to examine whether authoritative parenting facilitated academic success or merely accompanied it. Steinberg et al. confirmed the facilitation effect for white middle class 10- to 16-
year-olds. All three aspects of authoritative parenting—acceptance, psychological autonomy, and behavioral control—contribute to academic success for students. The study results indicate that parents who support psychological autonomy, exercise firm control, and exhibit warmth and acceptance toward the child support the development of the child's psychosocial development.

School-age children's stress

Yamamoto (1979) was the first to use children as the source of information about their stressors. He had fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students rate life events to see how they compared to the rating given those events by adults. Although they agreed with some of the adult ratings, there were a number of items related to school achievement and everyday events which were of significantly more importance to the children as individuals than had been recognized by the adults. For example, receiving a poor report card, giving a class report, and losing in a game were rated as more stressful than the birth of a sibling.

Presently the concern of a number of researchers has changed. Rather than seek to explore links between life change events which caused acute stress of either long or short duration, the effort is to identify the impact of daily hassles and uplifts on the psychological and somatic symptoms of the individual. With this in mind, Compas et al. (1987) found a significant relationship between daily stressors and psychological symptomatology and behavior problems in adolescents. Rowlison and Felner (1988) did not find a significant relationship between hassles and adjustment when the teacher rated
the child. However, the relationship was significant when the parent rated the child.

Parfenoff and Jose (1989) linked teacher reports of student problem behavior and adaptive function with daily hassles for second, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. Results indicate that hassle scale scores were significantly related to the children's self-rated anxiety and teacher rated antisocial behavior.

Kanner, Feldman, Weinberger, and Ford (1987) examined the relationship of uplifts and hassles to anxiety, depression, distress, self-restraint, perceived support from friends, perceived social competence, and general self-worth in 232 sixth-grade students. Results of the study confirmed hassles and uplifts related to these outcomes. As may be expected, hassles are related to a number of negative outcomes. There are significant gender differences to particular items such as self-restraint and perceived social support which may reflect differences in the development of twelve-year-old males and females.

Efforts to examine daily hassles for children have clarified the importance of understanding what it is children find stressful. In addition, using children as the source of information about stress as they understand it and focusing on children's experience of daily life has allowed some initial exploration of the development of coping skills and strategies attempted by children. For example, Band and Weisz (1988) asked children 6-, 9-, and 12-years-old in individual interviews to describe "things that make kids your age feel bad, unhappy, or scared" after which they were asked to tell about a time
when they themselves had felt this way. In a process consistent with the transactional view of stress and the mediating function of the individual, during the interview the children were asked to describe what they thought and did when the episode occurred. Finally, they were asked to assess the efficacy of their efforts by responding to "did it work?"

The children were asked to consider events across several domains of everyday occurrences ranging from interaction with adults, (e.g., teacher, parents), interaction with peers, doctor visits, grades, and getting hurt. Results indicate not only a change in coping strategies consistent with those that would be expected by expanding cognitive development, but also an age-by-situation variation which indicates children's ability to vary strategies across contexts.

Ryan (1989) also used interviews with school-aged children in grades three through six. Results again confirm active appraisal on the part of children who use both cognitive and behavioral strategies when faced with things that made them feel "bad, nervous, or worried."

Dickey and Henderson (1989) interviewed kindergarteners, and first- and second-graders in an attempt to identify types of stressors children experience and the variety of coping strategies available to them. It was determined that, even for these very young students, achievement and peer relations were significant stressors. Two additional stressors were personal injury or loss and the personal discomfort associated with the school environment such as noise and schedule demands.
These children did not mention home stressors. That may mean the context of the interview was also the context of the response. In addition, it may mean these children were able to maintain separation of their home/family living from their experience of school. Another alternative explanation may be that these children were not presently experiencing difficulty within the domain of family experience.

A similar study (Paterno, 1987) with first- and third-grade students and middle school students grades five through eight indicate an increase in frequency of two stressors—school work and peer relationships—over the age span. There was also a significant decrease in the report of distress caused by physical injury or loss and the discomfort associated with the school environment. The coping strategies children reported they use also changed as a function of age. Older children were more likely to use distraction activities to divert their attention, as well as physical or verbal expression of intense emotion. This was in contrast to younger children who used coping strategies which were attempts to pursue a solution that would eliminate or relieve the stressor.

Children ages 10 to 14 were administered an open-ended instrument to identify strategies they use in dealing with academic and social stressful events as well as the degree to which the individual perceived control over the event (Compas et al., 1988). The events were then categorized into either problem-focused or emotion-focused coping strategies. These are categories of adult coping strategies suggested by Folkman and Lazarus (1980) and
Lazarus and Folkman (1985). One purpose of the study was to determine the value of the categories in studying coping strategies of children.

Problem-focused coping is defined as effort(s) to act on the source of stress to change it. Emotion-focused coping is defined as effort(s) to regulate emotional states that are associated with or result from stressful events. The data in this study were then compared to measures of emotional/behavioral problems as identified by a parent and by self-report. For this sample, self-reported behavioral/emotional problems represented a mismatch between perceived control over the stressor and the number of alternatives generated by the child.

There were some methodological issues which highlight the difficulty in interpreting other results of the study. For example, the researchers included in the emotion-focused coping category such reported strategies as "hit the other person," "threw things," and "yelled at the other person." This is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1985) conceptualization of coping, and with others who view coping responses on a continuum. However, it leaves open to question when a coping strategy is maladaptive or, in interaction with other individuals, compounds the stress of the event. Therefore, when results indicate the number of emotion-focused alternatives generated and strategies used were positively related to emotional/behavioral problems it may be a misrepresentation of the positive connotation most often associated with the term coping strategy.
Greene (1988) also experienced methodological problems in an attempt to further clarify the normative experience of stress for school-age children. Eighty-four children in grades four, five, and six were asked to identify stressors, the type of affective response associated with each stressor, and the disruptive impact for the individual, e.g., "made it hard to concentrate," "I got a headache." Seven thematic categories evolved from the data: Personal loss; school; peers; self; family; extra-curricular; and other. However, the total number of responses the children generated was not included and the "other" category was dropped from reporting due to the low number of responses in that category.

A similar difficulty occurred in the development of the affective response category. It was the intent to identify affective states associated with types of stressors. However, in addition to affective responses (e.g., anger, fear, and sadness), the author included within the affective response category somatic responses (e.g., disruption of eating or sleep patterns) and psychological reactions (e.g., lowered self-esteem and preoccupation). Unfortunately, the report did not distinguish between the three types of response included in the affective response category. A similar difficulty was noted with categorization and reporting of disruptive impacts. One element of interest to the present study is the report of the 18 most frequently reported stressors. For these children, one-third occurred within or were related to school.

The interviews on which most of the information about school-age children's stress is based serve as a reminder that children are
able to identify the events and circumstances that they experience as stressful. Therefore, children in the present study will be asked to provide information about stress as they perceive it.

Summary

The prior review of literature has provided a broad view of factors which contribute to understanding parental stress. On one hand, parental stress can be conceived of as a unique form of role strain which is the result of the number of role demands placed on the individual. Role demands have been presumed to be most relevant to parents with preschoolers and teenagers, children who by their developmental stage are characterized as placing extreme demands on parents. The nature of parental stress for parents with elementary school-age children has been less well-documented in the literature.

Examination of parent stress studies indicate that they could be more accurately categorized under a heading of mother stress. The minimal reporting of father data denies the current social interest in the expanding role of the father in the family.

The literature as cited here suggests the understanding of parental stress for parents of elementary school-age children would be enhanced by examining the relationship of parental stress to the everyday experiences of children. This would be further enhanced by exploration of parental perceptions of the three potential areas of parental concern suggested by Havighurst for school-age children—peers, developing intellectual skills, and personal autonomy.

The major aims of the study were:
1. To explore parental stress of parents with elementary school-age children within the bounds of a diverse school district.
2. To compare differences between mothers and fathers on total parental stress.
3. To determine the relative contributions of child characteristics and daily hassles, major life events, parent characteristics, and family characteristics to total parent stress.
4. To compare major life event differences between groups of parents who report high, normal, and low total stress scores.
5. To explore the frequency and intensity of three potential parental stressors identified in the preceding review of literature: peer relationships; developing intellectual skills; and personal autonomy.

Hypotheses

The specific hypotheses are:

H 1: Fathers will report levels of parental stress equal to that of mothers.
H 2: Parental stress will be mediated by life events, family contextual characteristics, parent characteristics, and children's gender and daily hassles.
H 3: Children's everyday stress will be related to parental stress. Further, children's frequency and intensity of daily hassles will be predictive of parental stress beyond that accounted for by parent characteristics, major life events, child and contextual characteristics.
H 4: Three potential parental stressors suggested by Havighurst, peer relationships, developing intellectual skills, and developing
independence and autonomy, and supported by the review of literature will be related to measures of parental stress.

In addition, the present study will explore the prevalence of daily hassles for elementary school-age children in grade four; parental characteristics such as gender, age, parenting experience, and education; and the family context characteristics of income, employment, and parental support.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

Selection of Subjects

Subjects were parents and children in the attendance area of a culturally and socioeconomically diverse school system in central Ohio. School district policy required volunteer participation from both the elementary school administration and the individual teacher before children and parents could be recruited for the study. Further, children were in either fourth or fourth-fifth grade classrooms. To minimize potential difficulty for school system employees, the sample under study enlisted the participation of teachers including all classrooms in which fourth grade students were in attendance. Teachers from two elementary school buildings agreed to participate in the study. One building had six grade four-five classrooms. The second building housed three fourth-grade-only classrooms. When a classroom teacher expressed willingness to participate, all parents and children in those classrooms were recruited for participation in the study. Parents were sent notice of their selection with a letter explaining the purpose of the study and
requesting consent for their children's and their participation (Appendix A). The letter included reassurance of confidentiality for their responses and all responses to the children's inventory administered in the school setting. Only those children who had parental permission were included in the study.

Building One with fourth/fifth grade classes had an open classroom design. An additional supervising adult was present during each administration of the children's Everyday Life Event Scale (ELES) in compliance with the guidelines prescribed by the Human Subject Review Committee of the supervising university. Administration of the ELES for five of the six classrooms took place in the media center with the media specialist/librarian present. The sixth classroom administration occurred during the quiet reading period at the beginning of the school day with the classroom teacher present.

In building Two with three self-contained classrooms of fourth grade students, administration of the instrument took place in one of the classrooms with a classroom teacher in attendance. In both buildings, teachers collected permission slips from children prior to administration and monitored the process to be sure only those children with permission were included.

Children who participated were given an envelope containing the parent questionnaire to take home with them. A second cover letter was included with the materials. The second letter reintroduced the study and reassured participants of confidentiality for themselves and their children. Children within the classroom
who did not have parental permission were given a packet containing the parent questionnaire for their parents. All parents were encouraged to complete the instrument and return it in the preaddressed stamped envelope provided.

**Description of Instruments**

**The Parent Stress Index**

To address the question "what is the level of parenting stress experienced by parents of school-age children?" all parent participants were administered the Parent Stress Index, Form 6, (Abidin, 1983).

The Parenting Stress Index, PSI, Form 6 (PSI) has 120 items, 19 related to major life events. The other 101 items are relevant to two major domains--child and parent.

The total score on the PSI represents a measure of the overall stress the parent is experiencing. It has a reliability coefficient of .95. The child domain score is a measure of the parent perception of child qualities which make it difficult to perform the parent role. It has an alpha of .89. The reliability coefficients of the subscales of the child domain range from .62 for the subscales child distractibility/hyperactivity and child demandingness to .70 for reinforces parent. The child domain score is a composite of parent perceptions of the child's adaptability, acceptability, demandingness, mood, distractibility/hyperactivity, and the amount to which the parent experiences reinforcement from the child. The parent's perception of the child's temperament and overall affect is reflected in the child domain scores.
The parent domain score is a composite measure which includes subscales of parental depression, parent-child attachment, sense of restriction in the parent role, parental sense of competence, social isolation, significant-other relationship, and parent health. The alpha reliability coefficient for the total parent domain is .93. Alpha coefficients for the subscales range from .55 for attachment to .80 for depression with most falling between .70 and .80. Brief descriptions of the individual subscales are provided with the PSI in Appendix C.

The PSI manual (Abidin, 1990) includes reviews of a variety of studies that provide construct and concurrent validity of the questionnaire. The PSI has been shown to discriminate non-abusive from abusive parents; parents of hyperactive children from normal children; and parents of mentally retarded children from parents of normal children. Means and standard deviations for the child domain, parent domain and total stress scores for parents of children 9-12 are provided in Table 3. Clinical interpretation guidelines provided in the PSI manual suggest the normal range for the total score is 180-250. Scores below 175 are subject to question as false negatives in clinical settings.

The demographic data sheet appended to the PSI included household income, gender of the reporting parent and corresponding school-age child, educational level of the parent, employment status, number of children, birth order of the school-age child involved in the study, and number of other adults the parent experiences as available to participate in everyday child care.
An additional 25 item questionnaire designed for this study was sent home with the PSI and demographic forms (Appendix D). The questionnaire has items which reflect three areas of potential parental concern: children's interactions with peers, their developing intellectual skills, and indications of children's efforts to function autonomously. The instrument was reviewed for its relevance to the present study by two parents of elementary school-age children, an elementary school teacher and a member of the dissertation committee with oversight for the study.

**The Everyday Life Event Scale**

The Children's Everyday Life Event Scale (ELES) was first used under the title The Hassles Scale for Children (Parfenoff, 1989). It is an adaptation of the adult Hassles and Uplifts Scale (Kanner et al., 1981). The hassles scale included 49 items and covered several areas including the child's self esteem, peer relations, family relations, and school. Internal reliability was reported at .88, and test-retest reliability at two weeks was r=.74, p< .01. Suleiman (1992) added ethnically relevant items and 5 additional content areas: Role strain; minority status/acculturation; lack of family resources; violence and abuse for a total of 89 items. The internal reliability for the modified version is reported as alpha .92. The version used in this study (Jose, 1991) is based on the core items of both the Parfenoff and Suleiman versions. It includes 50 items with space provided for children to add items of their own.
Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Child Domain, Parent Domain and Total Parent Stress Index (PSI) Scores for Parents of Children 9-12 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Domain</th>
<th>Parent Domain</th>
<th>Total PSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=275

The present version of the ELES (Appendix B) was further reviewed by a panel of experts for its content validity and relevance to the cultural and geographic area in which this study takes place.

The instrument is designed so that children are asked to check items which have taken place within the past month. Next they are asked to circle whether they felt it was a problem. If the response is "Yes," then they are to indicate on a three point scale from "a little" to "a lot" the intensity of the problem. Scores can range from 0, suggesting no hassles experienced as problems, to 150, all hassles experienced and appraised as being a significant problem.

The day the children were administered the ELES they were given an addressed postage prepaid envelope containing instructions for the parent questionnaire, the form for demographic information, and the PSI. A number was assigned to the children's and parents' questionnaires for pairing parent-child questionnaires. No numbers were attached to the packets sent home with the other children in the classroom.

**Procedures**

After securing permission from the school district, building principals, and teachers, the researcher introduced herself and the study to the teachers in the participating classrooms. She presented the purpose of the study, to understand more about the stress children and parents experience in their lives, discussed the provision of appropriate alternate activities for non-participating class members and negotiated a time to administer the questionnaire to the participating children. Confidentiality and voluntary
participation were discussed. Teachers were encouraged to reassure the children that the process was not a "test" but a chance for them to help adults understand the things that are important in their everyday lives.

On the day of administration children were assured of confidentiality and their right to choose not to have their answers used in the study. They were given a pencil and a strip of colored construction paper to use in keeping responses aligned with questions. Two sample questions on the front of the ELES booklet were completed. Students were encouraged to ask any questions they might have about the question design. The ELES items were read to the children. They checked whether the event happened to them any time in the previous month. A pause between items allowed time for children to circle whether the events were perceived as a problem and to circle how much of a problem it was for them. When the ELES was completed children were given three self-adhesive labels each with the same number. Children placed a label on their ELES and the questionnaires in the packet they were carrying home for their parent.

At the end of the administration period child participants were given a packet of materials which had been prepared for the non-participating children. They were reassured that the packet was provided for their interest and enjoyment and was not required, but had been provided with the pencil as an acknowledgement of their willingness to help in the study. They were told their classmates had also received a pencil and packet.
Post administration procedures

Anonymity of participants was maintained in the administration and post administration procedures to maintain confidentiality of all participants and encourage the broadest range of participants. Names and addresses of all families in the participating classrooms were recorded from school files. A postcard was mailed to each family one week after the questionnaires were sent home. The content of the postcard, included in the appended materials, thanked all who had returned their packet and further encouraged those who had not yet completed their packet to return them. The postcard included information which would allow the parents to contact the researcher if they needed any further information. Postmark dates were recorded on each of the returned questionnaires to identify early and late respondents.

Data Analysis

Children's stress was described through the ELES. The range and mean for the number of items children reported as happening to them, the number experienced as problems, and the total intensity score provided the description of elementary school-age child stress.

Family context and parent characteristics were available from the demographic form included in the parent packet. Parental experience was defined and coded relative to the target child. If the target child was the eldest or only child in the family, experience was coded as zero. Parents of children with other birth order standings were coded as having experience. The parent support variable was coded relative to the number of adults the parent reported available
to care for the child(ren) on a daily basis. When the reporting parent identified only one adult caring for the child(ren) the item was coded zero for no additional support. Parents reporting two or more adults were coded as having support. No measure of the nature of the support or the actual number of times the responding parent used support of others was attempted in the present study.

Regression procedures were used to determine the relationship of children's everyday event stress to parental stress. To partial out the contribution of demographic variables to any variance in parental stress scores age, gender, race, education, and income were entered first in all hierarchical regression analysis. These were followed by the context variables, employment and parental support. The primary child variable, gender, was added prior to testing the impact of major life events and children's everyday hassles. The relationship of potential parent stressors, those suggested by Havighurst, to parental stress was explored through a combination of regression and corelation procedures.
Chapter IV

Results

The goals of this study were to explore stress of parents with elementary school-age children and measure the relationship of parental stress, if any, to potential areas of concern related to children's school experience identified by Havighurst (1972). Initially, stress scores for parents who participated without their child are reported relative to the stress scores for parents with children in the study. Stress scores for mothers and fathers who had given permission for their children to participate were compared. The relative contributions of parent, child, and family context variables were determined. The contribution of children's everyday life events as a contributing factor in parental stress was investigated. Finally, three areas of potential parental concern related to school-age children were explored: (1) developing intellectual skills, (2) developing independence or asserting autonomy, and (3) peer relationships.
Population

Census data for the school district were provided by the Ohio Data Users Center. The district total population was 88,257. The school district served 15,736 children aged 5 through 17. Forty-one percent of the family households were married couples with related children; 3% were households of children living with a single-father; and 12% were households of children with a single-mother. The racial composition was 94% White, 4% Black. Census data estimates report educational attainment for persons 25 years and over. Four percent of the adults within district boundaries had completed less than 8 years of school. An additional 19% had not completed High School. Seventy-five percent of the adults in the school district were high school graduates or higher. Eleven percent had earned a baccalaureate degree or higher. For families in the labor force with children 6- to 17-years-of-age, 69% reported both parents working. The median family income was $34,948. Poverty status based on 1989 income figures state that 14% of the school district children under 18 lived below the poverty level. The average poverty threshold for a family of four persons was $12,674 in 1989.

Subjects

There were 240 children in nine available classrooms. A total of 69 children, 28.75%, received permission from parents and participated in the study. Parents of 48 of the children completed the parent packet. The 48 parent-child pairs included three couples who completed the stress inventory together.
Results of the Parent Stress Index (PSI) reported by parent gender do not include the three cases where it is impossible to differentiate by parent gender, i.e., those completed by a couple rather than by mother or father alone. Normal probability plots for all PSI scores indicate that stress as measured by the PSI is normally distributed throughout the reporting sample.

One parent reported completing the stress inventory relative to a preschool child with severe physical disability rather than the target elementary child. The inventory for this family was deleted from the analysis and subsequent reporting. Seven of the children whose parents contributed to the study were identified by their parents as having special needs, e.g., receiving support from school personnel for a learning disability or attention deficit disorder. For the present sample a Wilcoxon two-sample location test (Hollander & Wolfe, 1973) indicated no significant difference between PSI scores for parents of children with special needs and all others. Therefore, the analysis reported here are inclusive of these parents and their children.

Thirteen parents who had not given permission for their children to be part of the study completed the PSI and accompanying questionnaire. In the study being reported here, eighty-one family units are represented by either child alone (21), parent alone (13), or parent-child together (47).

The education level of the reporting adult and the mean family income for the sample are provided in Table 4. The information has been reported for the total sample and by categories of low, medium,
Table 4. Education of reporting Adult and Mean family income for reporting sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total PSI</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Income</th>
<th>N less than HS degree</th>
<th>N with H.S. Diploma</th>
<th>Minimum 1 yr college or Voc/Tech</th>
<th>Graduate College or Voc/Tech Institute</th>
<th>Advanced Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSI&lt;175</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$48,500</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSI 175-250</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSI &gt; 250</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$34,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sample</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>$39,670</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and high total PSI scores defined by Abidin (1990). Two percent of the adults in the sample had not completed high school. Twenty-five percent of the adults were high school graduates, an additional 25% had completed at least one year of college or vocational/technical training, 32% were college graduates and 8% had degrees beyond the Baccalaurate. The mean family income was $39,670.

Analytical Procedures

All analytical procedures were completed using Minitab Statistical Software Release 8 Macintosh Version (1991).

Results of Data Analysis H1

H1: Fathers will report levels of parental stress equal to that of mothers.

H0: Mothers and fathers will not report equal levels of parental stress.

H0: Mf ≠ Mm

H1a: Mean total PSI scores for fathers, Mf, will be equal to the mean total PSI scores for mothers, Mm.

H0: Mf = Mm

Two sets of PSI scores were available for study. Parents who had given permission for their children to participate in the study and those who had not. Table 5 contains the mean scores for each domain of the PSI for parents with children in the study (PWC) and those parents, all mothers, for whom there are no corresponding child data (PNC).

Mean scores for PWC and PNC fell within the normal range, Total PSI=175 to 250, for parent stress as defined in the PSI manual.
Table 5. Mean Child Domain, Parent Domain, Total PSI and Life Event Scores for Parents with Child (PWC) in the Study and Parents with No Child (PNC)* in the Study

**Child Domain Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C Domain</th>
<th>Distractable</th>
<th>Reinforce</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Adaptable</th>
<th>Demanding</th>
<th>Child Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Parent Domain Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P Domain</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Attachment</th>
<th>Restriction</th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Isolation</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Parent Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Total PSI and Life Event Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total PSI</th>
<th>Life Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PWC</td>
<td>219.00</td>
<td>24.437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNC*</td>
<td>235.62</td>
<td>27.769</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** PNC*: Parents who completed the stress measures for themselves, but had not given permission for the child to participate.
The Child Domain subscores were nearly identical for the two groups of parents. The difference in total stress scores on the PSI between PWC and PNC are a difference in the Parent Domain Scores for the two groups. The subscores of the Parent Domain were higher across all categories for parents who did not give permission for their children to participate.

For a clearer representation of the sample, a total of three outlying scores, those above the 99th percentile and below the first percentile, were removed. Tables 6 and 7 describe total PSI scores for the remaining set by parent gender, child gender, and child participation status. Means, standard deviations, maximum and minimum scores are provided for fathers with children in the study (FWC), mothers with children in the study (MWC), couples (C) with children in the study, and mothers with no corresponding child in the study (MNC). There are a total of 29 sons and 28 daughters represented in the sample. The mean total PSI stress scores were within the range determined to be normal, between 175 and 250, (Abidin, 1990). Excluding those parents reporting as a couple, mean total PSI scores are higher for parents of sons. A large range of response evident in the scores for each group, from 69 to 123, in conjunction with standard deviations 30.8 to 40.6 provide evidence of significant variability in all parent-child gender combinations.

Two 2-sample t-tests were used to examine the difference in mean total PSI scores for the groups of parents. A t-test for FWC and MWC was completed. MWC were then compared with MNC. Results indicate that mean differences are not significant at \( \alpha =.05 \) (Table 8).
Table 6. Mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum and range of total PSI for fathers with sons in the study (FWCs), mothers with sons in the study (MWC), and for mothers of sons not in the study (MNCs*).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FWCs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>226.4</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWCs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>218.38</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>200.5</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNCs*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>235.0</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. C are couples who reported joint stress scores. MNC*: Mothers who completed the stress measure for themselves, but had not given prior permission for the child to participate.
Table 7. Mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum and range of total PSI for fathers with daughters in the study (FWCd), mothers with daughters in the study (MWCd) and mothers who participated without their daughters (MNCd).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FWCd</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>215.5</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWCd</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>209.88</td>
<td>32.84</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNCd*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>221.8</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. C are couples who reported joint stress scores. MNC*: Mothers who completed the stress measure for themselves, but had not given prior permission for the child to participate.
Table 8. T-test comparison of FWC, MWC and MNC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FWC</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>221.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>214.2</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNC</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>235.6</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>-1.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n=13 for FWC, n=13 for MNC, df=42 for each t-test.

α=.05
Results for the sample do not support $H_0$. The mean total PSI scores for fathers are comparable to the mean total PSI scores for Mothers. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Although the total mean PSI scores were not significantly different for FWC, MWC, and MNC, patterns appeared in the data for the parents relative to the gender of the child. Fathers with sons in the study, $FWC_s=226.4$, had higher total PSI mean stress scores than mothers with children in the study, $MWC_s=218.38$, but lower total PSI mean stress scores than mothers who had not given permission for their children to be part of the study, $MNC_s=235$. The pattern was repeated for fathers and mothers of daughters, $MWC_d < FWC_d < MNC_d$.

Data Analysis $H2$: Parental stress will be mediated by life events, family contextual characteristics, parent characteristics, and children's gender.

$H0$: Life event measures, family contextual characteristics, parent characteristics, and children's gender will have no significant mediation effect on total PSI scores.

Describing the regression expression as:

$$y = \sum a_i x_i + c$$

the null hypotheses becomes:

$H0$: $a_i = 0$.

As indicated in the analysis of $H1$, when the outLiars were deleted, mean stress scores reported in Table 6 and Table 7 were lower for parents in $FWC_d$, $MWC_d$, and $MNC_d$ who were reporting stress relative to elementary school-age daughters. Variability was significant for all groups. To confirm the potential child gender effect
for the entire sample, the out-liers (all daughters one low and two high scores), were returned to the data set. PSI scores for parents by child's gender are reported in Table 9. Mean PSI total scores remained higher for parents with sons. However, variability as indicated by the range, 175 points, and standard deviation, s.d.=42.31, is greater for parents raising daughters.

The family context variables reviewed in Chapter II of this report, e.g. employment, family stage, and income, were entered into a regression analysis to determine the amount of variability in parental stress scores that could be explained for the families by the context in which parenting took place. To facilitate this process, a family employment index was used to represent time not available for parenting and self-care. The family employment index, EI, was the ratio of the number of full time plus half the number of part time employed adults to the total number of adults in the household. The formula is:

\[
EI = \frac{\text{number full time employees} + \frac{1}{2} \text{part time employees}}{\text{total number of adults}}
\]

The combined impact of income level relative to family was entered as income per person. Income per person was the ratio of the total income of the family to the number of adults plus one-half the number of children. The formula is:

\[
\text{Income per person} = \frac{\text{total family income}}{\text{number of adults} + 0.5(\text{number of children})}
\]

Parental experience was defined in relation to the target child. When the target child was the oldest or only child, parents were
Table 9. Mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum and range of total PSI scores for all parents in relation to child's gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sons</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>222.00</td>
<td>33.65</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughters</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>218.87</td>
<td>42.31</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The extreme high and low scores for the sample are reported relative to daughters.
defined as inexperienced. Parents were experienced if the target child was at least the second sibling.

Another parent characteristic, educational attainment, was coded to represent adults who had attained less than a high school equivalent, high school completion, at least one year of college or vocational/technical training, completion of a Baccalaureate degree or a program at a vocational/technical institute, and those who had completed degrees beyond the Baccalaureate. Educational attainment was reported in the description of the sample at the beginning of this chapter (Table 4). Parental age was coded in categories representing 5 year increments beginning with under 25 and ending with over 50 years of age.

As a measure of support, parents were asked how many adults were available to help care for the children in the family on a daily basis (Table 10). The mean total PSI scores indicate a trend toward lower stress scores for parents with more than one adult available to care for the child on a daily basis. The support variable in the numerical analysis was treated as a dichotomous variable. Those who identified more than one adult available to help care for the children on a daily basis were defined as having support.

PSI total stress scores were reported by the number of children in the family (Table 11). Forty-three of the 60 families (72%) had either two or three children. Stress scores for these two groups are nearly identical. The number of children in the family was entered separately into the analysis and in the ratio defining income per
Table 10. Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum of total PSI scores for all parents by number of adults available to care for children on a daily basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caring Adults</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>234.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>219.96</td>
<td>35.82</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>197.4</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>273</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>220.92</td>
<td>38.11</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11. Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum of total PSI scores by number of children in the family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children in Family</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>223.7</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>219.48</td>
<td>34.07</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>218.75</td>
<td>39.13</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>233.7</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>212.5</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>195</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>220.92</td>
<td>38.11</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
person. As a separate variable the number of children in the family was included in the family context variables.

Regression procedures were performed in a three step process in an attempt to discover the amount of variability in parent stress scores that could be explained by the family context, major life events and parent and child characteristics. First, parent and child characteristics, family context variables, and life events were entered across all levels of parental stress. The regression procedures were repeated after deleting PSI total scores below the first and above the 99th percentile for parents of children ages 9-12. Finally, the combined variables were examined for their relevance to high, medium, and low stress groups (Abidin, 1990). Results of the regression analysis are in Tables 12 through 16.

The family context variables inclusive of the life events recently experienced by the family did not explain a significant proportion of the variance in parental stress scores, $R^2 = 19.1\%$. P values greater than .05 for parent and child characteristics and family context variables indicate that for the present sample the mediation effect of parent and child characteristics and the family context was not present (Table 12). The only significant variable was life events, ($p < .05$, $p=.01$). Therefore, $H_2$ was not supported by the data.

After removing the out-lying PSI values from the data set, parent and child characteristics and family context variables, inclusive of the life events recently experienced by the family, also fail to explain a significant proportion of the variance in parental
Table 12. Regression analysis of parent and child characteristics, family context variables, and life events across all levels of parental stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employ Index</th>
<th>Income per Person</th>
<th>Family Stage</th>
<th>Life Events</th>
<th>P gender</th>
<th>C gender</th>
<th>Parental Experience</th>
<th>Parent Age</th>
<th>Education Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coefficient</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>10.95</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>-5.01</td>
<td>-4.62</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-ratio</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.01*</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note P values have been rounded to the second decimal place.

n=54

s= 38.67  $R^2= 19.1\%$  *p < .05
stress scores, $R^2 = 22\%$ for all variables. However, income per person ($p=.15$), life events ($p=.06$), and the educational level of the parent ($p=.13$), indicate a potential for these variables to mediate the total Parental stress for the individuals in the present sample, $p< .10$ (Table 13).

High, medium, and low stress groups were defined by total PSI scores (Abidin, 1990). Parents with total PSI scores over 250 constituted the high stress group ($n=15$). Total PSI scores between 250 and 175 ($n=38$), and total PSI scores less than 175 ($n=7$), constituted the medium and low stress groups respectively. The small number of sample participants in the low stress group prohibited the use of multiple regression techniques to examine the potential mediation variables under discussion. Further, numerical procedures required that the number of variables entered into the equation be reduced for the high stress group. Parent and child gender and the developmental stage of the family were deleted. The potential mediation variables identified in the prior regression procedures were entered in addition to the parent characteristics. Table 14 contains the regression analysis of parent characteristics, family context variables, and life events for those with high PSI scores, total PSI over 250.

Results indicate none of the variables identified are statistically significant ($p < .05$) in the stress for parents in the high stress group. The $r$-squared value for the combined variables increased to $R^2 = 65.7\%$. 

Table 13. Regression analysis of the relationship of total PSI, parent and child characteristics, family context variables, and life events excluding PSI values below the First Percentile and above the Ninty-ninth Percentile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employ Index</th>
<th>Income per Person</th>
<th>Family Stage</th>
<th>Life Events</th>
<th>P gender</th>
<th>C gender</th>
<th>Parental Experience</th>
<th>Parent Age</th>
<th>Education Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coefficient</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>-1.74</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>-1.40</td>
<td>-3.59</td>
<td>-3.99</td>
<td>-5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-ratio</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-1.45</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.36</td>
<td>-.34</td>
<td>-.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.06*</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Coefficients and P values have been rounded to the second decimal place. *Values approaching significance.

n=51

s= 33.24  R²= 22.0%  p < .05
Table 14. Regression analysis of the relationship between total PSI scores, parent characteristics, family context variables, and life events for those with PSI scores over 250.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employ Index</th>
<th>Income per Person</th>
<th>Life Events</th>
<th>Parental Experience</th>
<th>Parent Age</th>
<th>Education Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coefficient</td>
<td>-29.82</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>-10.15</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-ratio</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>-.67</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Coefficients and P values have been rounded to the second decimal place. No p values approaching significance.

n=13

s= 15.86  $R^2=65.7\%$
Regression procedures were repeated for those with PSI scores between 175 and 250, Table 15. Minimal mediation effect of the combined family context variables, parent and child characteristics, and life events is evident in the analysis, $R^2=22.1\%$. Again, none of the variables considered individually reached statistical significance at $p<.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. For the sample under study, life event measures, family contextual characteristics, parent characteristics and children's gender had no statistically significant effect on total PSI scores.

Data Analysis

**H3:** Children's frequency and intensity of daily hassles will be related to parental stress. Further, children's frequency and intensity of daily hassles will be predictive of parental stress beyond that accounted for by parent characteristics, major life events, child and contextual characteristics.

**H0:** There will be no contribution to parental stress from children's self-identified daily hassles. There will be no relationship of children's hassles to parental stress.

Describing the regression expression as:

$$y = \sum a_i x_i + c$$

the null hypotheses becomes:

**H0:** $a_i = 0$.

The null hypotheses for identifiable relationship becomes:

**H0:** $\rho=0$.

The discussion in the introduction and review of literature suggest that children's stress and their responses to stress may impact parental stress directly or indirectly. Circumstances in which the parent perceives potential harm or difficulty independent of the child's response to stressors are examined in the next section (Data
Table 15. Regression analysis of the relationship of total PSI scores, parent characteristics, family context variables, and life events for those with PSI scores between 175 and 250.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employ Index</th>
<th>Income per Person</th>
<th>Family Stage</th>
<th>Life Events</th>
<th>P gender</th>
<th>C gender</th>
<th>Parental Experience</th>
<th>Parent Age</th>
<th>Education Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coefficient</td>
<td>-.90</td>
<td>20.47</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>-2.03</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>-3.71</td>
<td>-.518</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-ratio</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>-.56</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>-.95</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Coefficients and P values have been rounded to the second decimal place. No p values approaching level of significance.

n=34  4 cases contained missing values

s= 19.73  R²= 22.1%  p< .05
analysis H4). Hypothesis 3 represents the circumstances in which children's personal stressors impact on parental stress. The Everyday Life Event Scale (ELES) provided a measure of children's stressors. Sixty-eight children provided self-report of their daily stressors from the list provided of daily hassles on the ELES. Forty-seven were paired with information from their parent. The mean frequency of events reported as having happened (HAPPEN), the mean number children identified as problems (PROBLEM), and the mean intensity value attributed to the problems (INTENSITY), are reported in Table 16. The information in the table was presented as a comparison between children who had parents complete the study (CWP, n=47), and children without parental participation (CNP, n=21). All children reported relatively few hassles. The mean HAPPEN score for CWP was M=20.91. For CNP the mean was M=23.33. The potential range of listed items was from 0 to 50, with designated space for five additional items. The intensity of their reactions to hassles was correspondingly low: CWP, (M=31.6); CNP, (M=35.71); (range 0 to 150). The mean HAPPEN, PROBLEM, and INTENSITY scores are higher for children without parents in the study. The difference in elementary school-age males and females are reported in Table 17. The mean HAPPEN, PROBLEM and INTENSITY scores are higher for females.

The impact of children's self-identified hassles was explored by entering the HAPPEN, PROBLEM, and INTENSITY scores the children reported from the ELES into the regression analysis (Table 18). Only
Table 16. Means of the frequency (HAPPEN), problem attribution (PROBLEM), and intensity (INTENSITY) of children's total ELES scores for Children with Parents in the Study (CWP) and Children with No Parent in the Study (CNP)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>HAPPEN</th>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>INTENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CWP</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20.91</td>
<td>16.33</td>
<td>31.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNP*</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.33</td>
<td>18.48</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. CNP*: Children who had permission to be part of the study but whose parents did not return the PSI or school related questionnaire.
Table 17. Means and total range for the frequency (HAPPEN), problem attribution (PROBLEM), and intensity (INTENSITY) of children's total ELES scores for child participants by gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>HAPPEN</th>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>INTENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20.94</td>
<td>16.03</td>
<td>32.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.26</td>
<td>18.08</td>
<td>33.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-50</td>
<td>0-50</td>
<td>0-150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18. Regression analysis of the relationship of children's total ELES scores and parents total PSI scores for all participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAPPEN</th>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>INTENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coefficient*</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-ratio</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value*</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Coefficients and P values have been rounded to the second decimal place. No p values approaching level of significance.

n=46

s= 37.67   $R^2=3.8\%$
3.8% of the variability in the parent stress scores was explained by the combined variables representing children's everyday hassles (\(R^2=3.8\%, \ p<.05\)). After removing the outliers, the mediation potential for the variables representing children's self-reported stress remains not statistically significant (\(R^2=5.1\%, \ p<.05\)) (Table 19).

The more direct contribution to parental stress would be evident in strain in the parent-child dyad from children's behavioral responses to stress, particularly the subscales of the child domain of the PSI, e.g., parental perception of the child's mood and demandingness. Therefore, the HAPPEN, PROBLEM and INTENSITY scores from the children's ELES were correlated using Pearson product moment correlation with the subscales of the child domain of the PSI, \(\alpha <.05\). For the sample, \(n=47\), the significant \(r\) value is \(r=.243\). The results of the analysis are reported in Table 20. A significant \(r\)-value exists for the subscale Reinforce Parent with higher frequency of events reported having occurred. The correlation coefficients did not reach statistical significance for any of the remaining subscales of the child domain of the PSI. The small \(r\)-square values in the regression analysis are consistent with \(H_0\); however, the correlation results are inconsistent with \(H_0\). Therefore, the null hypothesis of no relationship of children's hassles to parent stress was rejected. For the present sample, children's frequency and intensity of daily hassles was related to parental stress, but did not contribute significantly beyond that accounted for by parent characteristics, major life events, and child and contextual characteristics.
Table 19. Regression analysis of the relationship of children's total ELES scores to parental total PSI scores excluding PSI values below the First Percentile and above the Ninty-ninth Percentile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HAPPEN</th>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>INTENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coefficient</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>-.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-ratio</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>-.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note* Coefficients and P values have been rounded to the second decimal place. No P values approaching level of significance.

n=44

s= 33.24  \(R^2= 5.1\%\)
Table 20. Correlation analysis of the relationship of children's self-reported ELES frequency (HAPPEN), problem attribution (PROBLEM), and intensity (INTENSITY) scores to parental perceptions of the child measured by the Child Domain of the PSI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C Domain</th>
<th>Distractable</th>
<th>Reinforce</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Adaptable</th>
<th>Demanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HAPPEN</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>.255*</td>
<td>-.067</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROBLEM</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTENSITY</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Significant r value for Reinforce parent with frequency of events reported having occurred.

n=47

* α≥ .05  **α≥ .025  ***α≥ .01
Data Analysis:

H4: Three potential stressors, peer relationships, developing intellectual skills and developing independence/autonomy, suggested by Havighurst and supported by the review of literature will be related to measures of parental stress.

H0: Circumstances in which the parent perceives potential harm or difficulty for the child with peers, developing intellectual skills, or developing independence/autonomy will not be related to parental stress.

H0: $p=0$.

Circumstances in which the parent perceived potential harm or difficulty independent of the child's response to peers, developing intellectual skills, or developing independence/autonomy were explored using information from a survey attached to the PSI. All parents with children in the study completed the 25-item inventory designed to reflect parental concerns about children's developing intellectual skills, developing autonomy/independence or peer relationships. The questionnaire was designed in the pattern of the children's ELES. Parents were asked to identify any of the everyday events on the questionnaire that had occurred for them or their child in the last month. They were asked to mark whether the event had been a problem for them and to indicate intensity on a scale of 1 to 3 for how much of a problem it had been. An H heading was used to distinguish happen, problem, and intensity scores that reflect potential concerns described by Havighurst (1972). Scores for event frequency (H happen) and problem attribution (H problem) could range from 0 to 25. The intensity score (H intensity) could range from 0 to 75. Space was provided at the end of the 25 items for parents to add other items not covered by the instrument. Seven
parents reported that they and their child had experienced none of the 25 events. One response sheet was not interpretable for this group. A total of five additional items were added by parents. These responses were placed in the categories peers, developing intellectual skills, and personal autonomy/independence. Two items did not clearly fall within the potential areas of concern as previously defined. One was related to bus transportation; the other to moving to a new school.

Two PNC did not complete the questionnaire designed to explore potential areas of concern suggested by Havighurst (1972). One PNC added two items to the questionnaire, one of which stated a desire on the part of the parent for the child to have more homework. The other item fell within the area of developing intellectual skills.

Multiple regression analysis and correlation procedures were used to explore the relationship of children's peer problems, intellectual skill development, and independence/autonomy stressors and parental stress. The regression analysis is reported in Table 21. Table 22 contains the Pearson product moment correlation of frequency, problem status and intensity reported by the parent with the child domain subscores of the PSI. The total $r$-squared value remained small in the regression analysis ($R^2 = 21.3\%$).

Correlation coefficients reached significant critical value ($\alpha < .01$) for the relationship between event frequency (H happen), problems (H problem), and intensity (H intensity) and the child
Table 21. Regression analysis of the relationship of frequency (H happen), problem status (H problem) and intensity (H intensity) of school related events to total PSI scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H happen</th>
<th>H problem</th>
<th>H intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coefficient</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>-.85</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-ratio</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Coefficients and P values have been rounded to the second decimal place. No p values approaching level of significance.

n=57

s= 35.18 \hspace{1em} R^2= 21.3\%
Table 22. Correlation analysis of the relationship of frequency (H happen), problem status (H problem) and Intensity (H intensity) of school related events to parental perceptions of the child measured by the Child Domain of the PSI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C Domain</th>
<th>Distractable</th>
<th>Reinforce</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Adaptable</th>
<th>Demanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H happen</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.353***</td>
<td>.341***</td>
<td>.376***</td>
<td>.411***</td>
<td>.426***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H problem</td>
<td>.245*</td>
<td>.304**</td>
<td>.271*</td>
<td>.457***</td>
<td>.441***</td>
<td>.423***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H intensity</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.261*</td>
<td>.268*</td>
<td>.408***</td>
<td>.439***</td>
<td>.384***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 47

* $\alpha \geq .05$ **$\alpha \geq .025$ ***$\alpha \geq .01$
domain subscales: acceptable, adaptable and demandingness (Table 22). Frequency (H happen) also reached significance (α <.01) for parental perception of the child's mood and reinforcement of the parent. Problem status (H problem) was significant (α <.025) for child's reinforcement of the parent. The only Child Domain subscale that did not reach a minimum statistical significance (α <.05) for frequency (H happen) and intensity (H intensity) was the measure of the child's distractability. The combined procedures do not support the null hypothesis. For the sample participants the alternative hypothesis, H4, was accepted. Circumstances in which the parent perceived potential harm or difficulty for the child with peers, developing intellectual skills, or developing independence/autonomy were related to parental stress.

Summary

Parental stress as measured by the PSI was normally distributed throughout the accepting sample, FWC, MWC, and MNC. Mean scores for all parents with children in the study (PWC) and parents who participated without their children (PNC) fell within the normal range (Total PSI=175 to 250) for parent stress as defined in the PSI manual. Mean total PSI stress scores were comparable for fathers and mothers. Fathers with children in the study (FWC) reported higher mean stress scores than mothers with children in the study (MWC). However, fathers with children in the study (FWC) reported lower mean stress scores than mothers who had volunteered their own participation, but had not given their children permission to participate (MNC).
Excluding those parents reporting as a couple, mean total PSI scores are higher for parents of sons. Mean total stress scores are higher for each set of parents of sons than the comparable set of parents of daughters: \( \text{FWC}_s > \text{FWC}_d, \text{MWC}_s > \text{MWC}_d, \text{and \ MNC}_s > \text{MNC}_d \). Standard deviations and range of scores are higher for parents of daughters, variability is broad in all parent-child gender combinations.

Combined life event measures, family contextual characteristics, parent characteristics and children's gender had no significant mediation effect on total PSI scores. However, income per person \( (p=.15) \), life events \( (p=.06) \), and the educational level of the parent \( (p=.13) \), indicate a potential for these variables to mediate the total parental stress for individuals \( (p< .10) \). For the present sample, children's frequency, defined problem events, and intensity of daily hassles was not predictive of parental stress beyond that accounted for by parent characteristics, major life events, and child and contextual characteristics. Children's report of the number of everyday events that occurred were related to parental stress.

Circumstances in which the parent perceived potential harm or difficulty independent of the child's response to peers, developing intellectual skills, or developing independence/autonomy were explored. For the present sample, parental reported frequency, defined problem events and intensity of everyday events associated with peers, developing intellectual skills, and developing independence/autonomy were not statistically significant in mediating parental stress. However, the measures were related to
the PSI child domain subscales: parent reinforcement, mood, acceptability, adaptability and demandingness.
Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

The sample under study was unique in many ways. Although there was the element of self-selection, there was no obvious bias toward either high or low stress scores as a result of the selection process. The number of sons represented (n=29) and the number of daughters (n=28) were near equal. Although there were over three times as many mothers (n=41) as fathers (n=13) in the study, the near equal distribution of child gender was repeated in the parent groups, for example, FWC had FWC$_S$ =7 and FWC$_D$ =6.

Parental stress was evident for both fathers and mothers. There was no statistical evidence of a consistent benefit by gender of the parent in reduced parental stress. Fathers in the study experienced parental stress levels indicative of psychological involvement in the parent role equal to that of mothers in the study.

There was evidence of a pattern of influence by child gender on parental stress. In the sample, all groups of parents, FWC, MWC
and MNC displayed higher mean total stress scores for sons than for daughters. It appears something about the nature of boys or the demands associated with raising sons contributed to stress for these parents. The results are consistent with findings reported by Hetherington et al. (1992) that all family types, nondivorced, divorced single-mother and remarried, perceived their sons as less well adjusted than their daughters. Recent measures of behavioral and emotional problems for children ages 4 to 16 (Achenbach, Howell, Quay, & Conners, 1991) indicate that boys of all ages exhibit more external indications of behavioral and emotional problems than girls of corresponding ages.

The data on daughters are suggestive. The extreme scores for parental stress, those below the 1st and above the 99th percentile, were all relative to daughters. This is reminiscent of the old nursery rhyme "...and when she was good, she was very, very good and when she was bad, she was horrid." The design of the present study prohibits conclusions about salient variables in the extreme scores evidenced by individual parent-child dyads. As noted in the discussion of parents and sons, symptoms of problems in girls are more likely to be internalized rather than externalized (Achenbach et al., 1991). Symptoms such as withdrawal on the part of girls are less likely to impose immediate demands on parents therefore not contributing as directly to parent stress. When, however, a daughter's response is externalized it may have a greater impact on parental stress because the expectation of appropriate female response has been violated.
Life events were the only variable to reach statistical significance in the regression analysis of moderator variables and total parental stress. By definition life events are strongly related to adult stress (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). It is expected that the relationship to adult stress in general would be evidenced in parental stress. In the sample under study, life events were a single variable representing a range of major life change events, e.g., moving or pregnancy. Although the parent stress model that provided the basis for the present study (Abidin, 1989) represented life events as a single variable, in fact, as the present study demonstrates, when this is done much information about particular life events is lost.

In combination, life events, family context measures, parent characteristics and children's gender were not able to account for significant levels of the variance in parental stress scores. However, a combination of life events, educational level of the parent, and income available per person in the family approached significance in relation to total parent stress measures. In this society, educational attainment and income represent tools with which to access a variety of resources for individual and family use. A variety of personal and family resources may lessen the total parental stress an individual experiences by increasing the number of choices available for problem solving.

In studies of children and stress (Garmezy, 1983; Neuchterlein, 1970; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982), intelligence has been shown a protective factor. Intelligence interacts with the educational environment to support academic success. If educational attainment
represents an indirect measure of parental intelligence in the present study, then the trend suggested by the data for these adults is consistent with the literature relevant to children.

Lewis' (1989) suggested that total income as a measure of varying liquid resources is a more viable alternative to socioeconomic status in exploring the impact of economic role strain on parent stress. In the present study, total household income was represented in conjunction with family size (income per person ratio) as a measure of varying liquid resources. In combination with life events and educational attainment, there is indication that sufficient liquid resources contribute to mediating parental stress.

It was unexpected that the family context variables, and parent and child characteristics were unable to explain a significant amount of the variability in total stress scores. Parental experience and age, family developmental stage, time available for parenting did not provide evidence that contribute to understanding the total parental stress measure. The independence of the total stress measure from all but a few of the family context and parent and child characteristics is somewhat encouraging. If the measures used are reliable indicators of the family context, parent and child characteristics, then no measurable relationship between the variables and the total stress outcome supports the notion that parental stress occurred as a result of self-appraisal on the part of the parent. By definition (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985), stress occurred when the parent appraised the parental role demands as taxing or exceeding their personal resources. Self-appraisal can be obscured
by the level of information available to the individual. There is the potential for intervention to reduce total parental stress scores by offering information that affirms present personal resources or, if necessary, offers new tools and insight to increase resources for the parent.

Children's everyday life event scores were not significantly related to parental stress. From early exploration of major life events (Yamamoto, 1979) to more recent explorations of children's self-reported stress (Ifekwunigue, 1985 & Corsello, 1987), there have been consistently low correlations between children's perception of stress and the perceptions of their parents. In the present study, there was some evidence of a relationship between the frequency scores of the children's everyday life event scale (ELES) and the reinforces parent subscale of the child domain of the PSI.

Abidin (1990) offered several diagnostic issues for consideration in response to the reinforces parent subscale scores. Three issues contribute to a discussion of the relationship identified in the present sample. First, the parent may be depressed. Second, the parent may be misinterpreting or unable to read the child accurately. Third, the child may be depressed. Parental depression is not likely to be directly related to a child's experience of outside family everyday events. However the ELES included items from both in and outside the family environment. The number that apply directly to interaction with a parent are very few, hence, unlikely to be reflected consistently in ELES frequency scores.
The parent may be misinterpreting or unable to read the child accurately. Misinterpretation or inability to read children accurately is consistent with the previous discussion of the discrepancy in children's and parent's perceptions of stress. The final item accompanying the ELES asked children if they felt good most of the time, some of the time, or hardly ever. Of the children who participated, 60% reported feeling good most of the time, 34% some of the time, and 6% indicated hardly ever. There were no additional measures in the study for identifying depression in the children. The relationship of the reinforces parent subscale to the frequency of reported ELES items remains inconclusive, but suggestive of a need for further study.

For the present sample, parental response scores for the school questionnaire items (everyday events associated with peers, developing intellectual skills, and developing independence/autonomy) were not able to explain a significant amount of the variance in total parental stress scores. However, the measures were related to five of the six PSI child domain subscales: parent reinforcement, mood, acceptability, adaptability, and child demandingness. Parent perceptions of developmental tasks outside the immediate control of the family are most strongly related to parental perceptions of the child's acceptability, adaptability, and demandingness. Items on the school questionnaire were intended to reflect developmentally appropriate tasks for these children. High child domain scores in relation to parents' perceptions of everyday school events suggest that both parents and children experience
some difficulty in negotiating the developmental demands of elementary school-age children.

**Implications of the study**

The evidence of the impact of child gender on parental stress suggest the need for further research to understand the nature of the difference for parents of sons and daughters. One suggestion would be to explore whether part of the difference is related to particular characteristics of male children or parental expectations of male children.

The present study used number of adults available to care for children in the family on a daily basis as a measure of support for parents. The mean scores indicate a trend toward lower stress scores for parents with more than one adult available to care for the children on a daily basis. The one individual who identified five caring adults suggests there might be diminishing benefit for families with large numbers of adults. This is understandable in light of the potential of conflicting advice from larger numbers of adults.

The present study does not indicate whether the potential benefit to lower stress scores is the result of instrumental support, (e.g., car pooling), emotional support to the individual, or a combination of both. The issue of support for the parent is further brought to question by recent measures of behavioral and emotional problems for children ages 4 to 16 (Achenbach et al., 1991). Unfortunately, for a number of children there exists a positive relationship between children's problems and the number of unrelated adults in the household. Further research is needed to
explore the nature of parental support needs and the relationship of adult support to children's problems.

Child domain scores in relationship to parents' perceptions of everyday school events suggest that both parents and children experience some difficulty in negotiating the developmental demands of elementary school-age children. If the problems identified on the school questionnaire are seen as new to the parent-child dyad then parents may benefit from acquiring additional information about children's development as well as learning new skills to address potential problems. Some relevant content units suggested by the results are: Content units which help parents understand children's peer relationships; content units that include suggestions for understanding children's expression of developing independence/autonomy; and units with tools for parents to use to support children's developing intellectual skills.

The suggestion of educational benefit for parents is not meant to imply failure on the part of parents who participated in the study. Parent education as it is perceived here can be considered enrichment for parents who are doing fairly well at meeting the basic demands of care for their children. The type of content units suggested by the relationship of child domain scores to parents' perception of everyday school events are those that could reduce emotional strain through understanding. The goal of parent education in this context is one of increased parental confidence and enjoyment of the parental role.
Parental stress was evident for both fathers and mothers which suggests parents may benefit from parent education. If so, then if parents are to avail themselves of learning opportunities planners will need to be cognizant of barriers to participation. Time, location, child care, and cost are just a few of the potential barriers in need of consideration so that arrangements are inviting to both fathers and mothers.

Little of the variability in total parent stress was accounted for by the family context variables, parent, and child characteristics incorporated in the present study. Life events as a composite measure was the single most explanatory variable. Although the parental stress model that provided the basis for the present study represented life events as a single variable, much information about the impact of particular life events has been lost. Life events such as divorce, which redefine the family unit and have direct implications for children, may contribute to children's everyday events and parental stress differently than other events under the broad category life events. Studies which incorporate children's perceptions of major and everyday life event stress would enrich the current understanding available. A combination of life events, educational level of the parent, and income per person approached significance in relation to total parent stress measures. These findings need further confirmation with other larger and more diverse samples.
Limits of the research study

Few children added stressors to the Everyday Life Event Scale, ELES. An optimistic view of this phenomenon might assume the ELES covered the broadest range of experience for the children in the study. It is more likely the children who volunteered to participate were not focused on hassles in their lives or that the items were not relevant to them as individuals. Overall the children appeared to have relatively few hassles (mean for children with parents in the study, CWP, M=20.91; for children whose parents did not participate, CNP, M=23.33; range 0 to 50) The intensity of their reactions to hassles was also low (CWP M=31.6, CNP M=35.71, range 0 to 150). However, low is a relative term in this case indicated by a numerical measure. Numerical values are highly abstract. Fourth grade students were chosen to best represent the developmental level of elementary school children. Within that grade level it is assumed there were children for whom numerical representation may have been too abstract. The research design did not allow alternative measure of the children's self-perceived daily hassles.

The ELES offers the opportunity for researchers to address a highly diverse sample, however, for the children who participated in the present study, demands of cross cultural experience and chronic poverty were largely missing. The diversity represented in the school district population was that of income, employment and educational level, not culture. Further research is needed to examine whether children with higher self-reported stress scores and other
cultural backgrounds show a stronger relationship to total parental stress than was identified for these children and parents.

Abidin's parent stress model was a useful tool as a component of the research design. Its primary strength lies in identifying the personal and societal context in which parent stress occurs. The results of the present study suggest that the model could be further enhanced for parents of elementary school-age children by the addition of the school context.

The Parent Stress Index is a very long instrument for survey purposes, 120 items. The five page booklet may discourage some parents. As in this study, many research questions require additional questionnaires beyond the original PSI, thereby, contributing to the length. McIntire (1991) suggested a measure of parent affect may be useful as an alternative to parental stress measured by the PSI. An alternative choice such as his may be appropriate in some cases, however, the child domain of the PSI offers unique potential for parents to describe their perceptions of children's response to stress exhibited in the child domain as well as supply a measure of their own stress levels.

The questionnaire used to explore parental concerns about children's relationships with peers, developing intellectual skills and developing independence/autonomy is untested in other settings. The findings from its use have implications for curriculum for parents of elementary school-age children. However, until there is further confirmation of the results of the study, a variety of content
units can be prepared in advance and implemented when parents agree the topics are relevant to their needs.

Peers, developing intellectual skills, and developing independence/autonomy are broad descriptors of a variety of interactions and skills children display. The questionnaire as it was represented here had a very small subset of behaviors that could be categorized under these broad headings. Further, a limitation of questionnaires remains that individual items are open to interpretation. A case in point might be one item representing parental concern about peers: "child chooses friends that lead him/her." The interaction with peers is under question, however, the parent may also be concerned because the child's behaviors are perceived as a lack of personal independence in peer relationships. Researchers using interview procedures would have greater potential of identifying alternative interpretations as well as the potential of indentifying further concerns beyond those suggested by Havighurst or the current parent stress models.

Recommendations for replication and further study

A combination of qualitative and quantitative design features would strengthen subsequent studies. The pattern of stress scores relative to sons rather than daughters deserves further attention. Increased vulnerability to stress for young males identified in the literature review suggests that talking with parents about the perceived differences in sons and daughters may be helpful. Further, through an interview process, it might be possible to
determine other external demands that may be contributing to a gender difference, i.e., societal expectations of children's behavior.

Timing should be considered in the research design. The present study was completed at the end of the school year. The end of the first marking period would provide an alternative likely to introduce more variability into the measures as well as encourage response from a greater number of parents. Elementary school report cards provide parents with some insight into teacher perceptions of children's developing intellectual skills, their ability to work with peers, and their expressions of independence/autonomy. This may also be a time when parents and teachers have not yet developed successful patterns of working together. The combination of new potentially disturbing information and the, as yet, undeveloped joint problem solving activities of teachers and parents are likely to contribute to parental school related stress. It is hoped that many of the parent-to-teacher school stressors were managed by late Spring when the present study was implemented.

The nature of the problem necessitated assurance to family members of anonymity. However, by incorporating anonymity into the research design, follow-up procedures were severely limited. All participants in the present study responded promptly. The additional postcard reminder and thank you did not prompt further response. This prohibited comparisons between early and late respondents. Comparisons between early and late respondents have been demonstrated to be of value in making inferences about non-respondents (Miller & Smith, 1983). This leaves open to speculation
the difference between respondents and non-respondents. The nature of the difference between parents with children in the study and those who participated without their children suggest one area to further question. The pattern of higher mean stress scores in each of the parent domain subscales may be of practical significance if not statistical significance.

In the study reported here, random sampling procedures were hampered by a number of intervening circumstances, e.g., the school district contract. Every effort has been made to describe the sample and the original population frame so that readers may critically assess the representativeness of the sample and the generalizability of the findings reported. Other researchers may wish to include in their design recent recommendations (Braver & Bay, 1992) to use "plausibly correlated characteristics" to determine the degree respondents differ from non-respondents. For example, in the present study, the employment index was used to represent time not available for self-care or parenting tasks. Demographic indices could be used to estimate the differences in employment status for parents in the sample and the non-respondents. Combined with a number of other plausibly correlated characteristics, Braver and Bay (1992) recommend an estimation of representativeness be made and included in the report of the findings.

In conclusion, the findings open several questions about the nature and relationship of stress for parents and children. The first are those of gender. Although there was no measure of the salience of the parent role for fathers and mothers in the study, for the
fathers represented here role salience was demonstrated first by their willingness to participate and second by stress scores that are on a par with mothers in the study.

Gender appeared to have an impact on the parent-child dyad. Mothers and fathers averaged higher stress scores when parenting sons than their counterparts parenting daughters. In addition to gender, further information about the nature of support for parents and children is needed.

The outcomes defined more clearly three developmental tasks children of elementary school age confront: peer relationships, developing independence/autonomy, and developing intellectual skills. There is evidence that negotiation of these tasks is related to stress for both parents and children.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Dear Parent,

Nearly everyone is concerned about children and the problems they face like safety, drugs, and success in school. Unfortunately we only have a sketchy view of what it means to parents and children on a daily basis to face school and social problems. What are the concerns parents and children have each day? You have the answers to this question. By being part of a study being conducted at the Ohio State University you and your child can help us begin to answer that question.

Your child's class is one of a select few chosen by random to describe the everyday experience of school children and their parents. If you are one of the people who live with and regularly care for the child you know best what it is to be a parent of this child.

In a few days you and your child will be asked to fill out some questionnaires. If you give permission your child will fill out a questionnaire in class. They will be asked about their everyday hassles. Their hassles are things like having lost something, or arguing with a bother or sister. The items will also include phrases that may describe how they see parents and other adults behave, such as their worries about someone who may drink too much.

Because we at the Ohio State University believe adults and children in families deserve privacy we have designed the process to remain anonymous. No one at school will see their answers. The researchers will not know the children's names.

The children who have your permission will not be required to makeup for the class time they spend as volunteers. The children without permission to volunteer will be provided with activity packets which have been reviewed by your child's teacher for educational content and potential enjoyment. The volunteers will receive the same packet when they finish.
To be sure no one knows what the children answer, when they finish, they will close their booklet, put a number label on it and place it in an envelope which will be sealed. They will put matching number labels on your questionnaires so that families can be kept together. We will not know who you are. You will be asked to fill out a Parent Stress Index and questionnaires about your family and other school related concerns.

There are two ways you can be sure you and your child count in this study. You can begin by filling out the permission slip for your child and having your child return it by Monday, May 20. Then plan now to have your say. We know parents are busy. The whole process takes less than an hour of your time. That is less time than washing and drying a load of laundry or getting a car tuned up. Your efforts in this hour will provide information of lasting value.

If you have any questions now or when your child brings home the questionnaires please contact Yvonne Gustafson, the researcher who will directly handle the information. She can be reached by mail through the Department of Educational Studies, 160 Ramseyer Hall, 29 West Woodruff Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43085. For your convenience you may leave your name and number and a time when you may be reached by calling 848-8273. She will return your call and answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

David L. Boggs, PhD
Project Director

Yvonne Gustafson, MA
Dear Parents,

Thank you for agreeing to help describe the everyday experience of school children and their parents. As you know at this point, we only have a sketchy view of what it means to parents and children on a daily basis to face school and social problems. Today in class, the children with your permission, had an opportunity to do a questionnaire about Everyday Hassles that children have. To insure family privacy their answers were sealed in an envelope before any adult could read them. The forms your child has brought home for you are designed to describe parenting stress. Please take the time now to fill out the booklet and the white page and return it in the postage paid envelope by May 30. Your responses are anonymous, do not put your name or address on the questionnaire or return envelope.

If you have any questions about the study or are interested in a summary of the results contact Yvonne Gustafson, the researcher who will directly handle the information. She can be reached by mail through the Department of Educational Studies, 160 Ramsayer Hall, 29 West Woodruff Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43210. For your convenience you may leave your name and number and a time when you may be reached by calling 848-8273. She will return your call and answer any questions you may have.

Every parent is needed. Every family's story is important. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

David L. Boggs, PhD
Project Director

Yvonne Gustafson, MA
Dear Parents,

A few days ago you should have received a letter through your child about a study being conducted at the Ohio State University. If you did not receive the letter you missed the fact that your child's elementary school class is one of a select few chosen to describe the everyday experience of school children and their parents.

At this point, we only have a sketchy view of what it means to parents and children to face school and social problems on a daily basis. Please take the time now to help us understand the nature of stress parents and children have. Just complete the enclosed forms and mail them in the postage paid envelope by May 30.

Today in class, children who had permission from their parents, had an opportunity to do a questionnaire about Everyday Hassles that children have. To insure family privacy their answers were sealed in an envelope before any adult could read them. The forms your child has brought home for you are designed to describe parenting stress. If your child forgot to bring their signed permission form to school you may still count in the study by filling out the enclosed forms. Please return the booklet and the white page in the stamped envelope. Your responses are anonymous, do not put your name or address on the questionnaire or return envelope.

If you have any questions about the study or are interested in a summary of the results contact Yvonne Gustafson, the researcher who will directly handle the information. She can be reached by mail through the Department of Educational Studies, 160 Ramseyer Hall, 29 West Woodruff Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43210. For your convenience you may leave your name and number and a time when you may be reached by calling 848-8273. She will return your call and answer any questions you may have.

Every parent is needed. Every family's story is important. Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

David L. Boggs, PhD
Project Director

Yvonne Gustafson, MA

May 20, 1992
Sample questions for the Everyday Life Event Scale

Directions: Below is a list of different things that can happen to anyone. If one of these things has happened to you in the last month, make a mark (X) next to the number under the "yes" column. Go through all of the items marking whether they have happened or not then indicate whether you considered them to be a problem or not: Circle the "no" or "yes" under the "Problem?" heading. Finally, if it was a problem, please indicate how much of a problem it was by circling a number from 1 to 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happened to You?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>How much of a problem?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y_N_1. you were hurt at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A Problem? a little some a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1  2  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y_N_2. you broke something</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Children's Everyday Life Events Scale

Directions: Below is a list of different things that can happen to anyone. If one of these things has happened to you in the last month, make a mark (X) next to the number under the "yes" column. Go through the items marking whether they have happened or not. Then indicate whether you considered them to be a problem or not: Circle the "no" or "yes" under the "Problem?" heading. Finally, if it was a problem, please indicate how much of a problem it was by circling a number from 1 to 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happened to You?</th>
<th>How much of a problem?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__1. you misplaced or lost things</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__2. kids teased or avoided you</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__3. someone in your family was sick</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__4. you didn't have enough money</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__5. schoolwork was too hard</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__6. you were rushed, you couldn't relax or take it easy</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__7. you were sick</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__8. doing your jobs at home (cleaning your room, setting table, etc.)</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__9. difficulty in finding a quiet place at home</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__10. you were bored, not enough fun things to do</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__11. you were punished for something that you did or didn't do</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__12. you did something foolish or embarrassing in front of others</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__13. you thought about war or something scary</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__14. you were picked on because of your nationality or skin color</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__15. you were picked last for a team</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__16. trying to get along with other kids in your class</td>
<td>No Yes 1 2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__38. you were not able to watch TV programs or play video games</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Y__N__39. gangs in the school or in the neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__40. you took the bus to school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__41. you saw a family member who was drunk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__42. too many people live in your house or apartment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__43. arguing with your parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__44. arguing with your brother(s) or sister(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__45. fighting or violence in the school or neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__46. being alone too much</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Y__N__47. weighing too much or too little</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__48. not enough time for play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__49. someone has stolen something that belongs to you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y__N__50. not feeling safe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have we missed anything that bothers you? Please describe these things below:

51. ___________________________________________________ | No | Yes | 1  | 2  | 3  |
52. ___________________________________________________ | No | Yes | 1  | 2  | 3  |
53. ___________________________________________________ | No | Yes | 1  | 2  | 3  |
54. ___________________________________________________ | No | Yes | 1  | 2  | 3  |
55. ___________________________________________________ | No | Yes | 1  | 2  | 3  |
Information Request Form

Thank you for sharing some of the things that happen to you. Please answer as many of these as you can. This is about you. Your answers will not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do that.

How old are you? __________ What is your birthday? __________

Below are some words that describe people, circle which words describe you:

Afro-American Asian
Hispanic White Other
Boy Girl

You can make a sentence that describes your birth order by filling in the spaces with the numbers that fit you.

I am the __________ child of __________ children.
(1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th...) (total children in family)

Sometimes children have no brothers or sisters. Their sentence would look like: I am the 1st child of ___ in my family.

Here are some words that describe adults who care for children. Circle any that describe the adults who live with you and help take care of you.

Mother Father Grandmother Grandfather Step-father
Step-mother Aunt Uncle Friend Foster mother
Foster father Guardian

Circle the phrase that fits how you feel most of the time.

I feel good __________
always always some of the time hardly ever

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!
APPENDIX C

Parenting Stress Index (PSI)
Administration Booklet
Richard R. Abidin
Institute of Clinical Psychology
University of Virginia

Directions:
In answering the following questions, please think about the child you are most concerned about.
The questions on the following pages ask you to mark an answer which best describes your feelings. While
you may not find an answer which exactly states your feelings, please mark the answer which comes closest to
describing how you feel. YOUR FIRST REACTION TO EACH QUESTION SHOULD BE YOUR
ANSWER.
Please mark the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the number
which best matches how you feel. If you are not sure, fill in # 3.

1  2  3  4  5

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

Example:
I enjoy going to the movies. 1 2 3 4 5
(If you sometimes enjoy going to the movies, you would circle #2.)
1. When my child wants something, my child usually keeps trying to get it. 1 2 3 4 5
2. My child is so active that it exhausts me. 1 2 3 4 5
3. My child appears disorganized and is easily distracted. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Compared to most, my child has more difficulty concentrating and paying attention. 1 2 3 4 5
5. My child will often stay occupied with a toy for more than 10 minutes. 1 2 3 4 5
6. My child wanders away much more than I expected. 1 2 3 4 5
7. My child is much more active than I expected. 1 2 3 4 5
8. My child squirms and kicks a great deal when being dressed or bathed. 1 2 3 4 5
9. My child can be easily distracted from wanting something. 1 2 3 4 5
10. My child rarely does things for me that make me feel good. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Most times I feel that my child likes me and wants to be close to me. 1 2 3 4 5
12. Sometimes I feel my child doesn't like me and doesn't want to be close to me. 1 2 3 4 5
13. My child smiles at me much less than I expected. 1 2 3 4 5
14. When I do things for my child I get the feeling that my efforts are not appreciated very much. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Which statement best describes your child? 1 2 3 4 5
   1. almost always likes to play with me,
   2. sometimes likes to play with me,
   3. usually doesn't like to play with me,
   4. almost never likes to play with me.
16. My child cries and fusses: 1 2 3 4 5
   1. much less than I had expected,
   2. less than I expected,
   3. about as much as I expected,
   4. much more than I expected,
   5. it seems almost constant.

17. My child seems to cry or fuss more often than most children. 1 2 3 4 5
18. When playing, my child doesn't giggle or laugh. 1 2 3 4 5
19. My child generally wakes up in a bad mood. 1 2 3 4 5
20. I feel that my child is very moody and easily upset. 1 2 3 4 5
21. My child looks a little different than I expected and it bothers me at times. 1 2 3 4 5
22. In some areas my child seems to have forgotten past learning and has gone back to doing doing things characteristic of younger children. 1 2 3 4 5
1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Not Sure
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

23. My child doesn't seem to learn as quickly as most children. 1 2 3 4 5
24. My child doesn't seem to smile as much as most children. 1 2 3 4 5
25. My child does a few things which bother me a great deal. 1 2 3 4 5
26. My child is not able to do as much as I expected. 1 2 3 4 5
27. My child does not like to be cuddled or touched very much. 1 2 3 4 5
28. When my child came home from the hospital, I had doubtful feelings about my ability to handle being a parent. 1 2 3 4 5
29. Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be. 1 2 3 4 5
30. I feel capable and on top of things when I am caring for my child. 1 2 3 4 5
31. Compared to the average child, my child has a great deal of difficulty in getting used to changes in schedules or changes around the house. 1 2 3 4 5
32. My child reacts very strongly when something happens that my child doesn't like. 1 2 3 4 5
33. Leaving my child with a baby-sitter is usually a problem. 1 2 3 4 5
34. My child gets upset easily over the smallest thing. 1 2 3 4 5
35. My child easily notices and overreacts to loud sounds and bright lights. 1 2 3 4 5
36. My child's sleeping or eating schedule was much harder to establish than I expected. 1 2 3 4 5
37. My child usually avoids a new toy for a while before beginning to play with it. 1 2 3 4 5
38. It takes a long time and it is very hard for my child to get used to new things. 1 2 3 4 5
39. My child doesn't seem comfortable when meeting strangers. 1 2 3 4 5
40. When upset, my child is:
   1. easy to calm down,
   2. harder to calm down than I expected,
   3. very difficult to calm down,
   4. nothing I do helps to calm my child. 1 2 3 4 5
41. I have found that getting my child to do something or stop doing something is:
   1. much harder than I expected,
   2. somewhat harder than I expected,
   3. about as hard as I expected,
   4. somewhat easier than I expected,
   5. much easier than I expected.
42. Think carefully and count the number of things which your child does that bother you.
For example: dawdles, refuses to listen, overactive, cries, interrupts, fight, whines, etc.
Please circle the number which includes the number of things you counted.

   1  2 3 4 5
   1. 1-3
   2. 4-5
   3. 6-7
   4. 8-9
   5. 10+

43. When my child cries it usually lasts:

   1. less than 2 minutes,
   2. 2-5 minutes,
   3. 5-10 minutes,
   4. 10-15 minutes,
   5. more than 15 minutes.

44. There are some things my child does that really bother me a lot.

45. My child has had more health problems than I expected.

46. As my child has grown older and become more independent, I find myself more worried that my child will get hurt or into trouble.

47. My child turned out to be more of a problem than I had expected.

48. My child seems to be much harder to care for than most.

49. My child is always hanging on me.

50. My child makes more demands on me than most children.

51. I can’t make decisions without help.

52. I have had many more problems raising children than I expected.

53. I enjoy being a parent.

54. I feel that I am successful most of the time when I try to get my child to do or not do something.

55. Since I brought my last child home from the hospital, I find that I am not able to take care of this child as well as I thought I could. I need help.

56. I often have the feeling that I cannot handle things very well.

57. When I think about myself as a parent I believe:

   1. I can handle anything that happens,
   2. I can handle most things pretty well,
   3. sometimes I have doubts, but find that I handle most things without any problems,
   4. I have some doubts about being able to handle things,
   5. I don’t think I handle things very well at all.
58. I feel that I am:
1. a very good parent,
2. a better than average parent,
3. an average parent,
4. a person who has some trouble being a parent,
5. not very good at being a parent.

59. What were the highest levels in school or college you and child's father/mother have completed?

Mother:
1. 1-8th grade
2. 9-12th grade
3. Vocational or some college
4. College graduate
5. Graduate or professional school

Father:
1. 1-8th grade
2. 9-12th grade
3. Vocational or some college
4. College graduate
5. Graduate or professional school

60. How easy is it for you to understand what your child wants or needs?
1. very easy,
2. easy,
3. somewhat difficult,
4. it is very hard,
5. I usually can't figure out what the problem is.

61. It takes a long time for parents to develop close, warm feelings for their children.

62. I expected to have closer and warmer feelings for my child than I do and this bothers me.

63. Sometimes my child does things that bother me just to be mean.

64. When I was young, I never felt comfortable holding or taking care of children.

65. My child knows I am his or her parent and wants me more than other people.

66. The number of children that I have now is too many.

67. Most of my life is spent doing things for my child.

68. I find myself giving up more of my life to meet my children's needs than I ever expected.

69. I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.

70. I often feel that my child's needs control my life.

71. Since having this child I have been unable to do new and different things.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>Since having a child I feel that I am almost never able to do things that I like to do.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>It is hard to find a place in our home where I can go to be by myself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>When I think about the kind of parent I am, I often feel guilty or bad about myself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>I am unhappy with the last purchase of clothing I made for myself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td>When my child misbehaves or fusses too much I feel responsible, as if I didn't do something right.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>78.</td>
<td>I feel every time my child does something wrong it is really my fault.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>79.</td>
<td>I often feel guilty about the way I feel towards my child.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>80.</td>
<td>There are quite a few things that bother me about my life.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>81.</td>
<td>I felt sadder and more depressed than I expected after leaving the hospital with my baby.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>82.</td>
<td>I wind up feeling guilty when I get angry at my child and this bothers me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>83.</td>
<td>After my child had been home from the hospital for about a month, I noticed that I was feeling more sad and depressed than I expected.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>84.</td>
<td>Since having my child, my spouse (male/female friend) has not given me as much help and support as I expected.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>85.</td>
<td>Having a child has caused more problems than I expected in my relationship with my spouse (male/female friend).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>Since having a child my spouse (or male/female friend) and I don't do as many things together.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>87.</td>
<td>Since having my child, my spouse (or male/female friend) and I don't spend as much time together as a family as I had expected.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>88.</td>
<td>Since having my last child, I have had less interest in sex.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>89.</td>
<td>Having a child seems to have increased the number of problems we have with in-laws and relatives.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>90.</td>
<td>Having children has been much more expensive than I had expected.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>91.</td>
<td>I feel alone and without friends.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>92.</td>
<td>When I go to a party I usually expect not to enjoy myself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.</td>
<td>I am not as interested in people as I used to be.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>94.</td>
<td>I often have the feeling that other people my own age don't particularly like my company.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>95.</td>
<td>When I run into a problem taking care of my children I have a lot of people to whom I can talk to get help or advice.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
96. Since having children I have a lot fewer chances to see my friends and to make new friends. 1 2 3 4 5

97. During the past six months I have been sicker than usual or have had more aches and pains than I normally do. 1 2 3 4 5

98. Physically, I feel good most of the time. 1 2 3 4 5

99. Having a child has caused changes in the way I sleep. 1 2 3 4 5

100. I don't enjoy things as I used to. 1 2 3 4 5

101. Since I've had my child:
1. I have been sick a great deal,
2. I haven't felt as good,
3. I have noticed any change in my health,
4. I have been healthier.

PLEASE CONTINUE

There are life events that surround being a parent and may change parent stress. During the last 12 months, have any of the following events occurred in your immediate family? Circle Yes; or No for each of the following items.

102. Divorce Yes No
103. Marital reconciliation Yes No
104. Marriage Yes No
105. Separation Yes No
106. Pregnancy Yes No
107. Other relative moved into household Yes No
108. Income increased substantially (20% or more) Yes No
109. Went deeply into debt Yes No
110. Moved to new location Yes No
111. Promotion at work Yes No
112. Income decreased substantially Yes No
113. Alcohol or drug problem Yes No
114. Death of close family friend Yes No
115. Began new job Yes No
116. Entered new school Yes No
117. Trouble with superiors at work Yes No
118. Trouble with teachers as school Yes No
119. Legal problems Yes No
120. Death of immediate family member Yes No
Parent Stress Index Subscales

The parent stress index was designed to identify parent-child systems under stress and to guide in making professional judgements about referral for professional intervention. The domain scores are designed to help the professional identify more narrowly the arena from which the most stress is developing. The descriptions of the Child and Parent Domains which follow are adapted from the descriptions provided by Abidin (1990) in the manual accompanying the PSI. He cautions that scores must be viewed as working hypotheses whose validity need to be established through further inquiry.

CHILD DOMAIN: The Child Domain is designed to identify characteristics of the child which make it difficult for parents to fulfill their parenting roles. The working hypothesis from the Child Domain is that the major factor in overall parent stress is the child's behavior.

1. Child Adaptability measures the parent's perception of the child's ability to adjust to changes in his or her physical or social environment.
2. Child Acceptability measures parent perception of physical, intellectual and emotional characteristics of the child.
3. Child Demandingness measures parent perception of the demands the child places on the parent.
5. Child Distractibility/Hyperactivity measures parent perception of the child's activity level, attention span, restlessness or inability to stay with a task.
6. Child Reinforces Parent measures the parent perception of the child as a source of positive reinforcement.

PARENT DOMAIN: The Parent Domain is designed to identify characteristics of the parent which make it difficult for parents to fulfill their parenting roles. The working hypothesis from the Parent Domain is that the major factor in overall parent stress is the parent's functioning.
1. Parent Depression/Unhappiness/Guilt measures the presence of clinical depression.
2. Parent Attachment measures the absence of emotional bonding to the child, or an inability to read and understand the child.
3. Restrictions Imposed by Parental Role measures the parent's perception of the parental role as restricting their freedom and frustrating their attempts to maintain their own identity.
4. Parent's Sense of Competence measures parent perceptions of themselves as having a limited range of child management skills, or knowledge of child development. It provides a measure of a sense of being overwhelmed by the child and parenting role.
5. Social Isolation measures the parent perception of being isolated from peers, relatives, and other emotional support systems.
6. Relationship with Spouse measures perception of the lack of emotional and active support of the other parent in the area of child management.
7. Parental Health measures deterioration of the physical health of the parent.

**LIFE STRESS:** The Life Stress Domain is designed to identify parents who find themselves in situational circumstances which are often beyond their control. The Life Stress Scale provides some index of the amount of stress outside the parent-child relationship which make it difficult for parents to fulfill their parenting roles.
Information Request Form

Instructions: In order to carry out this study, it is important to have some additional information. Please mark (X) the questions below.

1. Adult filling out this form: Mother____ Father____
   Other________________ (such as legal guardian, foster parent)

2. The child's sex is ______ male ______ female.

3. Has he or she lived with you for at least four months of this school year?
   YES ___ NO ___

4. Does your child currently receive services for any of the following?
   a. learning disability
   b. ADD or H/ADD
   c. behavior problems
   d. other special needs
   YES ___ NO ___

5. How many children are in the family?__________

6. What are their ages?__________________________

7. How many adults are there available to help care for the children in the family on a daily basis?
   1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ more

8. What is your age?
   under 25___ 25-30___ 31-35___
   36-40___ 41-45___ 45-50___ over 50

9. Please mark any of the following that apply to the adults in your household. Use the column Adult 1 for yourself.

   less than 7th grade education
   9th grade education
   10th or 11th grade
   high school graduate or equivalent, GED
   at least one year of vocational/technical training
   vocational/technical school graduate
   at least one year of college
   college graduate
   graduate degree

   Adult 1 Adult 2 Adult 3

10. Presently adults have several levels of employment how many adults in your household are employed?
    full time?______ part time?______

   What kind of jobs are they?__________________________

11. Please indicate the best approximation of yearly income.

   under $10,000 ___ $10,001-20,000 ___ $20,001-30,000 ___ $30,000-40,000 ___ $40,001-50,000 ___
   $50,001-60,000 ___ $60,001-70,000 ___ $70,001-80,000 ___ over $80,000 ___

   THANK YOU
School Questionnaire

The following are everyday events or problems that parents and school age children can have. In the first column mark (X) yes if you and your child experienced these events in the last month. Then, in the second column mark yes if it was a problem. If yes, please circle (0) how much of a problem it was for you or your child. Thank you.

Example:

Y  N  child was hurt at school

Problem?  How much?
N  Y  1  2  3

Happen?  Problem?  How much?

Y  N  child broke a classroom rule
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  teacher didn't understand child
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  teacher's personality didn't fit child
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  teacher too hard on child
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  difficulty with another adult, such as coach
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  harsh discipline
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  child disagreement with best friend
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  child was left out
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  child was teased or picked on
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  was part of a group that got in trouble
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  child had too much time with friends
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  child had not enough time with friends
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  child worried about relationships with other children
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  child chose friends that led him/her
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  too many things to do (practices & clubs)
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  failed or did poorly on an assignment
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  too much school work
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  school work was too hard
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  assignments were too long
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  forgot assignments or supplies
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  worried about school work
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  missed a great deal about assignments
N  Y  1  2  3

Y  N  late or delayed being ready for school
N  Y  1  2  3

Please add any other school related problems you and your child have had in the last month. Circle how much of a problem each was.

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