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Running head: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN STRESS AND COPING

Gender Differences in Stress and Coping Among Adolescents

by

Carmelinda Longo

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presented to Carleton university
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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in coping among adolescents, while controlling for gender differences in domain and appraisal. Gender differences in domain were controlled, by giving ninety-two, fourteen and fifteen year old boys and girls the same three hypothetical problem scenario vignettes (Parent, Peer, School) to appraise and discuss how they would cope with the problem. Gender differences in appraisal were controlled statistically, using covariate analyses.

Participants completed the Coping Questionnaire, which assessed five dimensions of coping: Negative to Others, Problem-focused, Passive, Minimize/Reframe and Self-blame coping. When responding to the same specific stressors, boys and girls generally did not vary in their coping strategy use, consistent with the transactional model of stress and coping. Across all domains, however, girls did endorse Self-blame coping strategies more than boys. This sex difference remained, even when controlling for differences in appraisal ratings. A secondary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between psychological adjustment and the degree of fit between appraisals of control and the relative amount of Emotion and Problem-focused coping used. Results indicated that irrespective of the match between appraisal and coping, Problem-focused coping was consistently related to more positive outcomes, while Emotion-focused coping was associated with more negative outcomes. This study provides support of the importance of taking into account the stressor domain when examining gender differences in coping and contributes to minimizing the gap in gender research regarding stress and coping.

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Introduction

Coping with stress is a central concept in both everyday life and in research (Fields & Prinz, 1997). Human beings are constantly confronted with potentially threatening and taxing situations that require some form of coping or adaptation, such as managing emotions, directing behavior and thinking constructively (Compas, 1987; Compas et al., 2001). Adolescence, in particular, is a peak time for stress, due to the numerous changes taking place. First, there are physical and biological changes as a result of the onset of puberty. Next, there are social transitions such as forming one's identity, becoming part of a peer group, and beginning high school, all while gaining autonomy from parents (Brown, Clasen & Eicher, 1986; Smollar & Younsiss, 1985). Then, there is the beginning of sexuality with either same-sex partners or opposite sex others (Sullivan, 1953). A crucial factor influencing smooth transition through these stressful phases is successful coping (Compas et al., 2001). Stress is an important risk factor for psychopathology in adolescence (Grant, Compas, Thurm, McMahon & Ey, 2000) and the ways in which adolescents cope with stress can impact on their current or future development (Compas, 1987; Compas et al., 2001).

Research on stress and coping has been considerable over the past two decades and although many theories and empirical studies have been conducted, the focus has almost exclusively been on adults (Compas et al., 2001; Ptacek, Smith & Zanas, 1992). Research on children and adolescents have generally lagged behind and only recently have scientists begun to apply some of the theories and principles of the adult stress literature to this population (Bowker, 1993; Compas et al., 1999).

Yet, despite such advances, many gaps still remain, particularly, with respect to how demographic variables mediate the coping process (Ptacek, Smith & Zanas, 1992). Oddly enough, one of the most important demographic variable, that of gender, has been widely overlooked, rarely being the primary focus of investigation (Fair, 1993; Ptacek, Smith & Zanas, 1992; Ptacek, Smith & Dodge, 1994). This is true for studies with adults or children and adolescents (Fair, 1993). The exploration of possible gender differences in coping among adolescents is significant for two reasons (Ptacek, Smith & Zanas, 1992). First, sex differences have been found in the frequency of various psychological disorders; girls are two to three times more likely to experience depression than boys (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987, 1990). Maybe differences in coping may mediate the occurrence with which men and women experience specific psychopathology (Billings & Moos, 1981; Miller & Kirsch, 1987; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Second, it is possible that gender differences in coping may be the result of gender-linked socialization practices (Ptacek, Smith & Zanas, 1992).

The few studies that have addressed gender differences in coping have traditionally found that females engage in more emotion-focused coping strategies, while males engage in more problem-focused strategies (Piko, 2001; Renk & Creasey, 2003; Stone & Neale, 1984; Vingerhoets & Van Heck, 1990). However, some of these studies have been criticized because they failed to control for two very important variables: gender differences in problem domain (i.e., the type of stressor reported) and gender differences in appraisal (i.e., how the problem situation is evaluated), despite the evidence that these two variables have been found to influence coping (Porter & Stone, 1995).

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to examine gender difference in coping among adolescents while controlling for gender differences in domain and appraisal. The secondary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between psychological adjustment and the degree of fit between appraisals of control and the relative amount of problem and emotion-focused coping used.

Type of Stress and Domain of Stress

Before we can consider the concept of coping we must first consider the concept of stress, since coping can only be examined in the context of responses to specific stressors (Fields & Prinz, 1997). According to Lazarus and Launier (1978) stress is any event, either environmental or internal (or both) which taxes or exceeds the adaptive resources of an individual. Adolescents are usually faced with many stressful and challenging events (Fields & Prinz, 1997) due to the biological, social and developmental transitions they undergo (Hamburg, 1974). These stressful events can be grouped conceptually along several dimensions (Fields & Prinz, 1997) including, major stressful life events (e.g. death of a family member, parental divorce) and minor stressful life events (e.g. fighting with a friend, having trouble with school) (Coddington, 1972; Cohen, Burt & Bjorck, 1987; Kanner, Coyne, Schaeffer & Lazarus, 1981; Rowlison & Felner, 1988). According to Lazarus, these minor stressful life events, also referred to as Daily Hassles, are the “irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that in some degree characterize everyday transactions with the environment” (Kanner et al., 1981, p. 9). The adult literature has found that it is these Daily Hassles that occur most frequently and are more predictive of distress than the occurrence of major stressful life events (Kanner et al., 1981; Rowlison & Felner, 1988). Does this also apply to adolescents?

In a study of 12 to 17-year old adolescents, Compas, Davis and Forsythe (1985) had participants complete an open-ended questionnaire where they had to provide a list of Daily (occur during day-to-day lives) and Major (have a large effect on your life) events, both positive and negative, that had occurred to them in the last 6 months. Not surprisingly, more daily events were reported during the previous 6 months than major events. The valence of major and daily events also differed significantly. Within major events, more positive than negative events were reported. However, within daily events, more negative than positive events were reported.

In another study, Tolan, Miller and Thomas (1988) found that for 84 boys and girls, Daily Hassles tended to be the most frequently reported type of stressor, compared with Developmental Transitions (starting high school), Induced Transitions (sibling moving away from home), and Circumscribed Events (death of a family member). In addition, participants completed the Offer Self-Image Questionnaire (OSIQ), an 11-scale measure, designed to assess a variety of self-esteem indices, such as: impulse control, emotional tone, body and self-image, social relationships, morals, educational goals, sexual attitudes, family relationships, mastery of the external world, psychopathology and superior adjustment. Correlations between the 11 OSIQ scales and the four types of stressors indicated that Daily Hassles was most strongly related to the OSIQ scales. However, this varied by gender. For females, reporting more Daily Hassles was significantly related to lower body image satisfaction, lower moral clarity, greater psychopathology, and poorer adjustment and family relations. For males, reporting more Daily Hassles was only significantly related to two scales: poorer family relations and less perceived mastery of the external world.

Thus, it appears that daily hassles are significantly related to adjustment indices in adolescents, more so than less frequent, but more severe events. While both boys and girls are affected by the frequency of Daily Hassles, girls appear to be more negatively influenced by them than do boys.

Several criticisms can be raised about the Tolan et al., (1988) study. First, although the results indicated that Daily Hassles were more strongly related to adjustment, this significant relation may be due, in part, to the fact that Daily Hassles were the most frequently reported stressors. Second, no one would argue that the death of a family member or personal illness would not have more of an effect on adjustment and self-esteem than a disagreement with a friend or parent and, might even contribute to some Daily Hassles. However, what is being said is that, in the absence of any major events occurring, Daily Hassles are stressful and can have a significant impact on adjustment (Bowker, 1993).

Despite the criticism of Tolan's et al. (1988) study, it is consistent with Compas's et al., (1985) study, that Daily Hassles are more common in an adolescent's life than major stressful events. The results of Tolan's et al., (1988) study are also consistent with the adult literature (Kanner et al., 1981; Rowlison & Felner, 1988) which indicates that Daily Hassles are more predictive of psychological problems than the occurrence of major stressors.

As Daily Hassles appear to be the more common types of stressors reported by both adults and adolescents, and related to psychological adjustment, they seem the most appropriate stressor to study in the context of adolescents' stress and coping.

Of course, there are many different types of Daily Hassles and grouping stressors into one broad category is not sufficient to get an accurate picture of adolescent coping (Band & Weisz, 1988). Therefore, specific domains within Daily hassles need to be identified.

Stark, Spirito, Williams and Guevremont (1989) had adolescents aged 14 to 17 report and describe a problem they had experienced over the past month. The problems were then categorized by reviewing the individual responses of the students and then classifying them into general categories, such as, problems with school or problems with money. The results indicated that the most commonly reported problems among adolescents across all three age groups and gender were a) hassles with parents b) hassles with friends c) hassles with school, and d) hassles with boy/girlfriend problems.

In another study, Spirito, Stark, Grace and Stamoulis (1991) also had children aged 9 to 14 years use a free-choice method to report on a common problem they had experienced during the prior month. Categories of problems were derived by two undergraduate research assistants who randomly selected 50 individual responses of the children and then arranged them into distinct groups, such as problems with school or problems with parents.

The results indicated that the most common stressors reported by children in all age groups were hassles with school, parents, friends and siblings. Under the category of school, the most common type of problem reported was concern about “bad” grades (46%); under the category of siblings, the most common type of problem reported was “fighting, yelling and bothering” (51%); under the category of friends, the most common type of problem reported was having a fight with a friend (46%); and under the category

of parents, the most common type of problem reported was fighting and disagreements with parents (35%). As the children increased in age from 9 to 14, there was an increase in reporting problems with boyfriends/girlfriends and a decrease in reporting problems with siblings. Therefore, the three categories of stressors (School, Parents, same sex Peers) reported by adolescents in the present study are consistent with the typical Daily Hassles consistently reported during the adolescent period (Stark et al., 1989).

Bowker (1993) also examined the most common types of problems that adolescents aged 12 to 14 reported, within the Home, School and Peer domain. The home domain was divided into five general categories, while the school and friend domain were both divided into six general categories. The results indicated that the most frequently reported type of problem within the home domain for both boys and girls were those dealing with adolescent-parent relationships, accounting for 35% of all the Home hassles (including conflict, punishment and issues of control). The most frequently reported types of problem within the school domain were those dealing with workload, undesirable work, and failure, each accounting for 21%. However, only workload and failure were equal for both girls and boys. The most frequently reported type of problem within the peer domain for both boys and girls, were those dealing with peer rejection, which accounted for 42% of all peer hassles reported. These results are fairly consistent with those of Spirito et al., (1991), with the exception of the peer domain, where the most common type of problem reported was fighting rather than peer rejection. However, these differences could be due to the differences in the specific coding categories used.

The results above are consistent with other researchers (Peterson & Hamburg, 1986; Siddique & D'Arcy, 1984) who argue that adolescence is a time when major changes take place primarily in the family, school and peer group.

Therefore, not only is it important to consider type of stressor but also the domain of stress. For adolescents, Daily Hassles with parents, peers (same-sex) and school appear to be the most prevalent. This specific age group also appears to be in a developmental transition with problems with siblings decreasing and problems with girl/boyfriends increasing (Spirito et al., 1991). As a result, for some adolescents, problems with siblings might not be as prevalent, while for others, problems with girl/boyfriends might not be as prevalent. Therefore, these two specific categories of stressors were not included in the study, whereas young adolescent coping strategy use in response to Daily Hassles in the domains of Parents, School and Peers were investigated. Participants were given problem scenario vignettes that corresponded to the most frequent types of problems reported under each of the three categories above (Bowker, 1993; Spirito et al., 1991).

Gender Differences in Problem Domain

Although both adolescent males and females report parent, peer, and school problems as the most common Daily Hassles, the frequency with which these stressors occur, differs across gender (Stark et al., 1989).

When Stark and colleagues (1989) had adolescents aged 14 to 17 report and describe a problem they had experienced in the last month, chi-square analyses revealed significant sex differences in the frequency of problems reported for each age group. Overall, males tended to report more academic problems while females reported more

interpersonal problems (e.g., with friends, family, boyfriend and parents). Of particular interest were the fourteen-year-old adolescents, of whom, 40% of males reported problems with school while only 19% of females did so. On the other hand, 19% of females reported problems with friend, while only 8% of males did so. When sex differences were examined across the four most commonly occurring domains (school, parents, friends and boy/girlfriend) a significant difference was found for 14-year-old boys and girls, but not for 15, 16 or 17 year-olds. Fourteen-year-old boys more frequently reported problems with school, followed by parents, friends and girlfriends, while girls more frequently reported problems with parents, than boyfriends, friends and lastly school.

In another study of 9 to 14 year-old adolescents who also reported on a problem they had experienced in the last month, Spirito et al., (1991) found significant sex differences in the frequency of the four most common domains (school, parents, friend and siblings) reported for the sample as a whole. Examining each age group, significant sex differences were found for 11 and 12 year olds only. Twelve-year-old boys reported problems with school more frequently than did girls; while 12-year old girls reported more problems with friends than did boys. Taken together, these two studies suggest that girls tend to be more relationship oriented than boys, and see Daily Hassles in the peer domain as most salient. Boys, on the other hand, appear to focus on more individualistic or self-oriented hassles such as ones relating to school performance.

These results are consistent with other researchers. Seiffge-Krenke (1995), found in her interview study with 22 adolescents from grades 6, 8 and 10, that the rate of reported interpersonal conflicts was higher for females than for males (81% and 69%

respectively). In describing these conflicts, females more frequently reported problems in the domain of peers, parents and identity, while males more frequently reported problems in the domain of school and leisure activity. In fact, males in all age groups were four times more likely than girls to report problems in the domain of school.

Studies with adults also confirm that men and women report different stressors. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) had 100 respondents aged 45 to 64, describe stressful events that occurred to them over the previous month. Each stressful episode was then classified along four broad categories: health, work, family matters and other, with an inter-rater agreement of .90 to .97. A chi-square analysis indicated significant sex differences in the frequency of stressful events reported. Women reported more problems having to do with health and family, while men reported more work problems.

In another study, 294 participants reported on a recent personal crisis or stressful life event (Billings & Moos, 1981). Each event was categorized into one of six types: illness, death in the family, economic, children, other interpersonal events, and other non-interpersonal events. The results found significant gender differences in the frequency of events across these categories. Women were more likely than men to select events in the children (19.3 vs. 13.1%) and illness (29.9 vs. 22.4%) categories, whereas men were more likely than women to select events in the economic category (30.1 vs. 13%).

Porter and Stone (1995) had 156 men and women report on the most bothersome event of the day, and their responses were coded into 8 categories: problems focused on the self, personal illness, marriage, parenting, problems with other people, work, financial problems and miscellaneous, with an overall inter-rater reliability of 85%. The results found significant differences between men and women in five of the eight categories.

Women reported more problems focused on the self, more parenting problems and more problems involving other people, while men reported more work-related problems and more miscellaneous problems. Therefore, we find the same trend in adulthood as in adolescents, women being more relationship oriented and men more individualistic.

It is important that we acknowledge the fact that boys and girls report different domains of stress as being salient because studies have shown that specific stressors are linked to specific coping strategies (Porter & Stone, 1995). For example, studies examining adolescent's coping with stressful academic events, assessed via self-report measures, have reported greater use of problem-focused strategies than emotion-focused strategies (Compas, Malcarne & Fondacaro, 1988). On the other hand, adolescents prefer using more emotion-focused coping, when coping with interpersonal stressors (Spirito et al., 1991, Stark et al., 1989).

Studies with adults have also confirmed that specific stressors are associated with specific coping strategies. In their study of 100 participants, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) found that work-related problems were linked with higher levels of problem-focused coping, while health-related problems were linked with higher levels of emotion-focused coping.

Why is identifying the influence of content on coping strategy use important? This is important because, as studies above suggest, boys report more academic problems and girls report more interpersonal problems and if this is not taken into account when examining gender differences in coping, it would appear that boys and girls cope differently because these stressors are associated with specific and distinct coping strategies (Porter & Stone, 1995).

The influence of problem domain on coping strategy use and the different domains reported by boys and girls, suggests the possibility that gender differences in coping that were found in previous research, which did not control for problem domain, may be inaccurate. In fact, boys and girls may actually use similar coping strategies when faced with the same stressor or problem domain (Porter & Stone, 1995).

Therefore, this study controlled for the different problem domains reported by boys and girls, by providing all participants with the same hypothetical problem scenario vignettes in the domain of School, Parents and Peers. It was expected that there would be no gender differences in coping strategy use when domain was controlled. It was also expected that coping strategy use would vary as a function of domain.

The Cognitive Model

To fully understand the stress and coping process, we need to study it within a coping framework. Lazarus and his colleagues (1984) developed a two-step cognitive theory of stress and coping, which is both relational and process oriented. The two processes include appraisal and coping. The theory is a cognitive one because what determines whether an event is stressful or not, depends on an individual's perception or appraisal of that event (Folkman, 1984). There are two forms of appraisal: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal (Folkman, 1984). The theory is relational because it involves a transaction between the person and the environment and it is process oriented because this transaction is dynamic, constantly changing and bi-directional (Folkman, 1984).

Primary and Secondary Appraisal

According to the transactional model of stress and coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), when individuals encounter an event they undergo a “continuously changing set of judgments about the flow of events for their well-being” (Lazarus & Launier, 1978, p.302). These judgments are referred to as appraisals and are divided into two types, primary and secondary. These two types of appraisal have different roles and deal with different information. In primary appraisal, the person asks, Is this event important for my well-being? The importance of an event to a person’s well-being is appraised according to three categories: irrelevant, benign-positive or stressful (Folkman, 1984). Irrelevant appraisals are seen as having no effect on a person’s well-being, while benign-positive appraisals are seen as having positive consequences (Folkman, 1984). Of particular interest are events appraised as stressful which are usually seen as taxing or exceeding the person’s resources and as endangering his or her well-being (Folkman, 1984). Stressful appraisals are evaluated in terms of harm/loss, threat, or challenge (Folkman, 1984). Harm/loss refers to damage already committed (e.g. break-up of a relationship) (Folkman, 1984). Threat refers to the possibility for harm or loss (e.g. writing an exam) and challenge refers to pleasant emotions with the possibility for gain and growth (Folkman, 1984). Appraisals are related to a person’s beliefs and way of thinking, that is why, given the exact same situation, people will respond differently, depending on what they believe is important to their well-being (Folkman, 1984). Primary appraisal has usually been measured by asking participants how stressful they found the event, and whether they viewed the event as a threat, a loss or a challenge (see Compas et al., 1988; Ptacek et al 1992; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995).

Once an individual has appraised a specific event as stressful, the person must decide on the coping resources used to deal with the problem (Folkman, 1984). The evaluation of one's coping options is referred to as secondary appraisal (Folkman, 1984). The question typically asked is, What can I do? However, once again, the resources a person uses to cope with a specific event depends on their belief. According to Folkman (1984) the belief is about the control a person has to shape or influence a particular outcome. A person's belief about the control they have in a given situation will influence the coping options they feel they have available to deal with the problem. In adolescent research, secondary control has often been operationalized by asking adolescents how much control they have over the cause of the event or how much control they have over the outcome of the event (see Compas et al, 1988; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995).

In summary, both primary and secondary appraisal are two very important but distinct concepts. Primary appraisal focuses on how stressful an event is, while secondary appraisal focuses on the coping options available, which is linked to the control individuals feel they have over the outcome of the event (Folkman, 1984).

Coping

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) coping is "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the internal and/or external demands that are created by the stressful transaction" (Folkman, 1984, p.843). In this definition, coping is regarded as a continuously active process, that varies as the demands of the stressful situation vary and it is a purposeful, motivational, goal-directed process, whose aim is to resolve the source of stress. Although Lazarus and Folkman's (1984)

definition of coping was created for an adult model, this definition has been widely used to conceptualize coping among adolescents (Compas et al., 2001).

A broad definition of coping is important because it differentiates between coping responses versus other stress responses, however, it fails to distinguish among the many different types of coping responses one can execute (Compas et al., 2001). To reconcile this problem, several dimensions of coping were established.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two dimensions of coping, problem focused and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is aimed at acting on the stressor and includes such responses as searching for information, finding possible solutions to a problem and taking action to change the environment that is causing the stress. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, is aimed at regulating the emotional states that may accompany a stressor and includes such responses as crying, seeking support from others and trying to avoid the source of stress. According to Folkman and Lazarus (1984) all coping involves the use of problem and emotion-focused coping. However, what determines which coping strategy is used more than the other is appraisal of a given event (discussed below).

Unfortunately, many different coping dimensions have been proposed (Compas, Banez, Malcarne & Worsham, 1991), contributing to confusion about the basic structure of coping and making it difficult to compare findings across studies (Compas et al., 2001). Other popular dimensions include primary and secondary control coping (Rothbaum, Weisz & Snyder, 1982). Primary control coping is aimed at influencing objective events, such as problem solving; whereas, secondary control coping involves

efforts to fit with or adapt to the environment, such as acceptance or cognitive restructuring (Rothbaum et al., 1982; Rudolph, Dennig & Weisz, 1995; Weisz, 1990).

Another widely used coping dimension is approach (active) vs. avoidance (passive) coping (Billings & Moos, 1981). Approach coping includes behavioral (directly confronting the problem), cognitive (changing the way one thinks about the problem), or emotional activities oriented towards a stressor. Avoidance coping includes behavioral (not confronting the problem), cognitive (minimize the threat of the situation), or emotional (release tension by expressing emotion) strategies oriented away from the stressor (Billing & Moos, 1981; Ebata & Moos, 1991; Roth & Cohen, 1986).

Despite the apparent diversity among the various dimensions used to classify coping responses, some convergence has emerged (Compas et al., 1991). The consensus seems to be that there are two overarching groups of coping strategies. The first type of coping strategy is designed to affect the stressor more directly by changing or mastering the environment, the individual or both (Compas et al., 1991). These strategies have been labeled problem-focused coping, approach coping, active coping and primary control coping. The second type of coping strategy is designed to control or manage the negative emotions associated with the stressor (Compas et al., 1991). These strategies have been labeled emotion-focused coping, avoidance coping, passive coping and secondary control coping.

Although the coping dimensions above were all designed specifically for an adult population, they all have been used in research with adolescents (Band & Weisz, 1988; Compas et al., 1988; Ebata & Moos, 1991).

Many researchers have criticized these coping dimensions for being overly broad and placing many dissimilar types of coping responses into two general categories (Coyne & Gotlieb, 1996). For example, emotion-focused strategies can include such things as seeking social support, praying, wishful thinking and self-criticism (Compas et al., 2001). Also, a single coping strategy may be directed towards both dimensions simultaneously (Compas et al., 1996). For example, if one walks away from a fight with a parent, it can serve the emotion-focused goal of calming oneself down and the problem-focused goal of thinking of ways to solve the problem (Compas et al., 1996).

Since many researchers have criticized the coping dimensions as being too broad, a wide variety of subtypes of coping have been proposed (Compas et al., 2001). Some of them include cognitive restructuring, social support, humor, blaming others, religion, catastrophizing and problem-solving (Compas et al., 2001). All of these subtypes, as well as others not discussed here, have been used in adolescent coping research but once again, there has been very little consistency among the subtypes used both across studies and measures (Compas et al., 2001).

More recently, factor analyses of adolescents' coping responses have been conducted (Compas et al., 2001). The results have yielded more than two factors, suggesting that the two dimensions of coping (emotion-focused versus problem-focused; avoidant versus approach; and primary control versus secondary control) used in adult studies does not sufficiently reflect the structure of coping in adolescents (Compas et al., 2001).

For example, Paterson and McCubbin (1987) had 467 high school students complete a 98 item coping questionnaire whose items were selected from open-ended

reports of how high school students coped with stress. A factor analyses of the questionnaire resulted in 12 factors. In another study, Bowker et al., (2000) had adolescents describe how they coped with peers hassles, using open-ended responses. The responses were then coded into Emotion-focused, Problem-focused and Negative to Others coping strategies. In a later study, Bowker (2004) developed a coping questionnaire based on the previous spontaneously generated coping responses. Factor analysis of the scale yielded 5 factors: Problem-focused, Minimizing/Reframe, Passive, Negative to Others, and Self-blame coping, with Minimize, Passive and Self-blame coping reflecting subtypes of Emotion-focused coping.

In summary, many of the coping dimensions used in adolescent research have been taken directly from adult models of coping. Although the coping dimensions have varied across study, they all seem to represent the same theme. That is there are two dimensions of coping strategies, one aimed at changing the stressor directly, and the other aimed at changing the emotion brought on by the stressor. Unfortunately, factor analyses have shown that more than two dimensions are needed to describe the coping strategies used among adolescents.

In the present study, coping was measured by having participants complete The Coping Questionnaire which assessed 5 dimensions of adolescent coping (Bowker, 2004).

Coping Styles and Strategies

Coping can be distinguished in terms of coping styles vs. coping strategies. “Coping styles are methods of coping that characterize individuals reactions to stress either across different situations or over time within a given situation (Compas, 1987,

p.394).” They reflect a stable or trait-like quality. On the other hand, coping strategies “refer to the cognitive or behavioral actions taken in the course of a particular stressful episode, (Compas, 1987, p 394)” which may differ across context and time depending on the nature of the stressful event. Coping strategies are consistent with the transactional model of stress and coping proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

On a conceptual level, coping styles and coping strategies are very distinct and important concepts in the coping process. However, when these two concepts are used in research on adults and children, they are often not being distinguished. Once again, this makes comparisons across studies very difficult (Compas, 1987).

In the present study, the coping measure used (discussed above) reflected coping as a strategy, consistent with Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) model of stress and coping.

Appraisal and Coping

Folkman (1984) outlined a complex set of relations among appraisals of threat, challenge, control and the use of problem and emotion-focused coping. Specifically, Folkman (1984) proposed that if a situation is appraised as harmful or threatening and uncontrollable, the person will employ more emotion-focused coping. In contrast, if a situation is appraised as controllable, or changeable and challenging, the person will employ more problem-focused coping.

In a study of 100 community residing men and women, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) had participants describe a daily stressful event and appraise the event by indicating which of four statements best described the situation: 1) situation that you could change or do something about; 2) situation that must be accepted or gotten used to; 3) situation that you needed to know more about before you could act; and 4) situation in

which you had to hold yourself back from doing what you wanted to do. Participants were then given the Ways of Coping checklist (which categorizes coping into problem and emotion-focused coping) and asked to indicate those strategies they had used to cope with the event. The results indicated that situations in which something constructive could be done and in which more information was needed, generated higher levels of problem-focused coping than situations that had to be accepted. On the other hand, situations that had to be accepted and in which the person had to hold back from acting, generated higher levels of emotion-focused coping than those in which something constructive could be done.

Stone and Neale (1984) had 60 married couples describe the most bothersome event or issue of the day and appraise that event on various dimensions, including, how much control they had over the occurrence of the stressor, and how stressful the event was on a scale of 1 to 100. Then participants were presented with eight coping styles and had to indicate whether or not they used that style to handle the problem. As expected, several significant relationships between appraisal and coping were observed. The more control one had over the occurrence of the problem the less likely they were to use catharsis and acceptance as coping styles. Control over the problem did not influence how often direct action was used to cope with the stressor. However, given the wording of the control question, this finding was understandable. That is, the experiment asked about control over the problem's occurrence and not about control over the resolution of the problem. "Control over the resolution implies a relationship with direct action; control over occurrence does not" (Stone & Neale, 1984, p. 904). It was also found that events

appraised as severe were associated with increased use of catharsis, seeking social support, relaxation and religion.

Very few studies have examined the relationship between appraisal and coping among an adolescent population. Compas et al., (1988) had 130 young adolescents ranging in age from 10 to 14 describe a stressful academic and interpersonal event, and rate how much control they had over the cause of the event, on a 5-point scale. Participants were then instructed to generate a list of all the possible ways they could have dealt with the event and checkmark those they had actually used to cope with the event. All responses were classified as problem or emotion-focused coping by two research assistants with an inter-rater agreement of 96% for academic stressors and 94% for social stressors. The results found that adolescents perceived more control over the cause of academic events than interpersonal events and therefore, consistent with these perceptions of control, they generated more problem-focused alternatives for academic stressors than for social stressors. However, emotion-focused coping was unrelated to control beliefs.

Lengua and Long (2002) had 101, 8 to 12 year old students describe three of the “biggest problems” they had experienced in the past month and complete a threat appraisal scale and a positive appraisal scale, which assessed both challenge and resource appraisal. Student’s then completed the Children’s Coping Strategies Checklist. The results found that perceiving the stressor as more of a challenge and viewing oneself as having the resources to deal with the stressor was related to more adaptive coping strategies, such as, cognitive decision making, and direct problem solving.

Ebata and Moos (1991) had 190 adolescents aged 12 to 18 report on various life stressors and rate the severity of the stressor and the extent to which they saw the stressor as a challenge on a 4-point scale. Students then completed the Coping Responses Inventory-Youth form, which assess 8 dimensions of coping. The results indicated that participants who experienced more severe stressors sought more guidance and support and used more emotional discharge coping. On the other hand, appraising the stressor as more of a challenge was related to greater reliance on problem solving and logical analysis coping.

The studies above clearly show that primary and secondary appraisal play a very important role in determining the coping strategy used. Specifically, events appraised as harmful, threatening and uncontrollable elicit more emotion-focused coping, while events appraised as controllable, and challenging elicit more problem-focused coping.

In the present study primary appraisal was assessed by asking students to rate the degree to which they viewed each of the hassles as a threat, a loss, and a challenge, consistent with the definitions used by Folkman and Lazarus (1984). Students also rated the degree to which they viewed each of the hassles as emotionally upsetting and stressful. Secondary appraisal was assessed by asking students to rate the degree of control they had over each of the hassles.

Gender Differences in Appraisal

It is evident from the above discussion that appraisal of an event is related to the coping strategy used. However, do males and females appraise events in the same way? Research examining this topic has been both limited and inconsistent, with more evidence

for gender differences in primary appraisal rather than secondary appraisal (Compas et al., 1988; Seiffge-Krenke, 1995).

Seiffge-Krenke (1995) conducted intensive interviews with 22 adolescents from 6th, 8th and 10th grade. Subjects were required to report on events that had “worried them” and conduct primary and secondary appraisal of the event. Primary appraisal was assessed by asking adolescents whether they viewed the event as a challenge, a threat, a loss or neutral. Secondary appraisal was assessed by asking adolescents to rate their expected success with the stressor and their control over the stressor. The results indicated that when the type of event was held constant, females were four times more likely to appraise the same event as a threat compared to males, while males were twice as likely to appraise the same event as a challenge compared to females. As well, female adolescents reported higher expectations of failing to solve the conflict, but no gender differences emerged for controllability.

Consistent with this latter finding, studies by Bowker, Bukowski, Hymel and Sipola (2000) and Compas et al., (1988) reported no significant differences between boys and girls with regards to perceived control.

Adult studies examining gender differences in appraisal have also been limited and inconsistent. For example, Folkman and Lazarus' (1980) found no differences with regards to the number of events that men and women appraised as situations in which something could be done, that had to be accepted, in which more information was needed, or in which the person had to hold back from acting.

In another study, Ptacek, Smith and Zanas (1992) had 186 male and female undergraduate students describe the most stressful event of the day for 21 consecutive

days and appraise each event on a series of dimensions, including; how stressful they found the event, how expected it was, how controllable they perceived it as being when it occurred, how effectively they coped with it and whether they saw the event as a challenge, a loss or a threat. On average, women were significantly more likely than men to find the events stressful, whereas men reported a higher expectancy that the event would occur, more perceived control over the outcome of the event and greater effectiveness in coping. Men and women did not differ significantly in the frequency with which they appraised events as losses or as threats, but men significantly appraised more events as challenges than did women.

Why is identifying the influence of appraisal on coping strategy important? This is important because, as studies above suggest, boys are more likely to appraise events as challenges and girls are more likely to appraise events as stressful and threatening and if this is not taken into account when examining gender differences in coping, it would appear that boys and girls cope differently because these appraisals are associated with specific and distinct coping strategies (Porter & Stone, 1995).

The influence of appraisal on coping strategy use and the differences in appraisal by sex suggests, the possibility that gender differences in coping that were found in previous research that did not control for appraisal, may be inaccurate. Specifically, gender differences in coping may be confounded with gender differences in appraisal. In fact, boys and girls may actually use similar coping strategies if appraisal differences are controlled (Porter & Stone, 1995).

In the present study, as discussed above, participants appraised each of the three problem scenarios (Parents, Peers, School) on a series of dimension. It was expected that

there would be gender differences in primary appraisal but not in secondary appraisal. The gender differences in appraisal were controlled statistically using covariate analysis. It was expected that there would be no gender differences in coping strategy use, when gender differences in appraisal were controlled.

Gender Differences in Coping

Reviewing the literature on gender differences in coping is difficult because as noted above each study uses different conceptualizations of coping and different measures, which in turn influence the dimensions of coping (Compas et al., 2001). Overall, the findings on gender differences and coping among adults have been mixed.

The general consensus on sex differences in coping among adults is that females engage in more emotion-focused coping strategies or styles, while males engage in more problem-focused strategies or styles (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Hamilton & Fagot, 1988; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Stone & Neale, 1984).

A theory that has been advanced to explain gender differences in coping is socialization theory (Rosario, Shinn, Morch & Huckabee, 1988). Socialization theory holds that men and women are taught to deal with stressful events according to gender role expectations and widely held sex role stereotypes (Rosario et al., 1988). As a result, men are socialized to deal with stress instrumentally, whereas women are socialized to deal with stress more emotionally and to seek social support (Rosario et al., 1988).

In developing an open-ended questionnaire for assessing coping in response to stressful daily events, Stone and Neale (1984) found sex differences in the number and type of coping styles reported by 120 married individuals. In their study, participants were given 8 coping categories (e.g., distraction, situation redefinition, direct action,

catharsis, acceptance, seeking social support, relaxation, and religion) that they could choose from when describing how they coped with self-reported stressors. Results indicated that women significantly reported using religion, catharsis, relaxation, distraction and especially seeking social support, while men reported using direct action.

In another study of 997 adults, Vingerhoets and Van Heck (1990) had subjects complete the Ways of Coping Checklist, to self identified domains. The researchers found that males were more inclined to use problem-focused coping, positive thinking, personal growth, planned and rational actions, daydreaming, fantasies and humor. In contrast, females preferred emotion-focused coping, seeking social support, wishful thinking and self-blame. Results of these studies would tend to support socialization theory.

Although research on gender differences in adolescent coping is limited, generally, research has been consistent with the adult literature and socialization theory. In a study of 14 to 19 year old adolescents, Piko (2001) had subjects complete the shortened version of the Ways of Coping Questionnaire, in response to a self-identified "hard life event." Factor analysis was conducted, which gave a four-factor (passive, problem-analyzing, risky, and support seeking) solution. The results revealed that girls were significantly more likely to use passive and support-seeking coping strategies than boys, while no gender differences were found with respect to problem-analyzing and risky coping strategies.

In another study, Renk and Creasey (2003) had 169 late adolescents identify the types of coping strategies they used in response to stressors in general, using the COPE scale. This instrument which consisted of 15 conceptually different coping strategies, was

factor analyzed to form three factors: active problem-focused coping, active-emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping. The researchers found that adolescent females were significantly more likely to endorse using active emotion-focused coping strategies than adolescent males. However, there were no significant differences between male and female late adolescents in active problem-focused coping or avoidant coping.

In another study, Broderick and Kortelend (2002) had 396 students think about a problem they had had and discuss how they coped with the problem by completing the Children's Coping Styles Questionnaire. This questionnaire assessed 5 dimensions of coping, including, rumination, distraction, active-problem-solving, adult support seeking, aggression and emotional expressivity. Results indicated that girls were significantly more likely to use rumination and emotional expressivity compared to boys.

Although the studies above provide support for socialization theory, they have been criticized because they failed to control for gender differences in problem domain and appraisal (Porter & Stone, 1995). As stated earlier, boys and girls tend to report different problem domains and, different domains 'pull for' or are associated with different coping strategies. Therefore, the gender differences in coping found in the above studies, could actually be attributed to differences in the kinds of stressful events that boys and girls reported (Porter & Stone, 1995). Also discussed above, boys and girls tend to appraise events differently and different appraisals pull for or are associated with different coping strategies. Therefore, the gender differences in coping found in the above studies, could actually be attributed to gender differences in appraisal (Porter & Stone, 1995).

Studies that examined gender differences in coping while controlling for domain, paint a very different picture. Spirito et al., (1990) found no gender differences in coping strategy use when controlling for gender differences in problem domain. In a similar study, Stark et al., (1989) found that when gender differences in problem domain were controlled, only two significant main effects of gender were found. Boys were more likely to use wishful thinking than girls, while girls were more likely to use social support than males. There were no significant sex differences for use of distraction, social withdrawal, cognitive restructuring, self-blame, blaming others, problem solving, emotional regulation or resignation.

Overall, the studies above show that gender differences in coping are minimal or disappear altogether when gender differences in domain are controlled. Although Stark et al., (1989) found a few sex differences in coping despite controlling for domain, the study did not control for gender differences in appraisal. Therefore, the gender differences in coping found, could have been attributed to gender differences in appraisal.

Studies that have controlled for problem content and appraisal, while examining gender differences in coping are extremely rare. Porter and Stone (1995) had 156 participants describe the most bothersome event of the day and appraise the problem on eight dimensions including: control over the problem's occurrence; undesirability; the degree to which it changed or stabilized their lifestyle; degree of anticipation; meaningfulness of the problem; whether the problem was a single event or more chronic; whether the situation had ever happened before; and how stressful the event was on a scale of 1 to 100. Subjects were then presented with eight coping strategies (distraction, situation redefinition, direct action, catharsis, acceptance, seeking social support,

relaxation and religion) and asked which ones they used in response to the self-reported stressor. The self-reported problems were then coded into eight categories: personal illness, marriage, parenting, work, financial problems, problems with other people, problems focused on the self and other.

Gender differences in problem content, appraisal and coping were analyzed. First, significant differences were found between men and women in 8 problem content categories; women reported more problems focused on the self, more parenting problems and more problems involving other people. Men reported more work-related problems and more miscellaneous problems. There were no gender differences with respect to personal illness/injury, marriage or financial problems.

Second, gender differences in appraisal were analyzed. The eight appraisal categories were factor analyzed to reveal three factors: the first was labeled “severity” and included undesirability, meaningfulness, change and severity; the second was labeled “chronicity” and included anticipation, whether it had happened before and whether it was long-lasting; and the third was control over the occurrence of the event. Gender differences in appraisal for each of the eight problem categories were analyzed. The results found no gender differences in appraisals of severity and control for all eight of the problem categories and only one significant effect was found for appraisals of chronicity and problem type. Women rated problems focused on the self as more chronic than did men.

Next, gender differences in coping for each of eight problem categories were analyzed both before and after controlling for gender differences in appraisal. Before controlling for appraisal, only one significant difference was found, women were more

likely than men to use relaxation when coping with parental problems. After controlling for appraisal, men were significantly more likely to use direct action in coping with work problems than women.

To date, only one study has looked at gender differences in coping among adolescents while controlling for gender differences in problem content and appraisal. Compas et al., (1988) had 130 children and young adolescents describe a stressful academic and social event and appraise how much control they had over the cause of the event on a 5-point scale. Participants were then asked to generate a list of all the ways they actually used to cope with the event. Participants' responses were then categorized into emotion or problem focused coping. The results found that there were no gender differences in perception of control for academic or social stressors. As well, only one significant gender difference in coping strategy use was found, for only one type of stressor. Girls were more likely to use emotion-focused strategies in response to academic events than boys. There were no gender differences reported for the social stressor or problem-focused coping.

In summary, the studies above suggest, that controlling for gender differences in appraisal and domain, minimize the gender differences found in coping.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in coping among adolescents while addressing some of the criticisms of past research, including, controlling for gender differences in problem content and appraisal.

Coping and Emotional/Behavioral Problems

According to the transactional model of stress and coping, psychological and behavioral symptoms should be related to the “match” or “goodness of fit” between

appraisals of control and coping (Folkman, 1984; Forsythe & Compas, 1987).

Specifically, psychological/behavioral problems should be lower when adolescents match their coping with their perceptions of control (e.g. high control, more problem-focused coping; low control, more emotion-focused coping) and higher when appraisal and coping are mismatched (e.g. high control, more emotion-focused coping; less control, more problem-focused coping) (Folkman, 1984).

Forsythe and Compas (1987) had 84 college students identify a stressful major and daily event, rate the amount of control they had over the events and rate how they coped with the events using the Ways of Coping Checklist. Participants also completed the Hopkins Symptom Checklist, which measured 5 dimensions of psychological symptoms: depression, anxiety, somatization, interpersonal sensitivity and obsessive-compulsiveness. Results indicated that symptomatology was lower when there was a good fit between appraisal and coping, and symptomatology was higher when there was poor fit between appraisal and coping.

Very few studies have addressed this issue among adolescents. Compas et al., (1988) as discussed above in more detail, had participants complete two behavior problem questionnaires, including: the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and the Youth Self-Report (YSR), as well as, appraisals of control and coping strategy use. Appraisals of control and coping were dichotomized using median split procedures. This created a set of independent variables with two levels: high control vs. low control; high emotion-focused coping vs. low emotion-focused coping; and high problem focused coping vs. low problem-focused coping. The presence of an interaction would indicate the importance of the match between appraisal and coping. One significant interaction was

found. For social stressors only, behavior problems were highest when subjects believed they had control over the event but generated few problem-focused alternatives or, believed they did not have control over the event and generated many problem-focused alternatives. On the other hand, behavior problems were lower when subjects believed they had control and generated many problem-focused alternatives or believed they had no control and generated few problem-focused alternatives. No significant interactions were found for emotion-focused coping or for academic stressors.

Alternatively, other research has found that irrespective of the match between coping and appraisal, emotion-focused coping strategies, avoidant coping strategies and rumination are related to higher levels of internalizing and externalizing problems (Billings & Moos, 1981; Broderick & Korteland, 2002; Compas et al., 1988; Ebata & Moos, 1991). Conversely, problem-focused strategies and active coping are related to lower levels of internalizing and externalizing problems (Compas et al., 1988; Ebata & Moos, 1991)

What is it about emotion-focused strategies that lead to more problems? Researchers have found that emotion-focused strategies, particularly rumination, increases self-focused attention, which in turn prolongs the length and strength of depressive episodes (Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1986; Ingram et al., 1988; Morrow & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990) by “increasing the salience and frequency of recall of negative events and by interfering with attention and concentration” (Broderick & Korteland, 2002 p.202). Overall, ruminators exaggerate the severity of the problem and have low levels of self-efficacy (Lyubomirsky & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1995)

Compas et. al., (1988) as previously discussed above, had subjects complete the Youth Self Report (YSR), a measure of self-reported emotional and behavior problems, while their mothers reported on their children's emotional and behavioral problems, using the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). Significant correlations were found between the scores generated from the coping measure and the CBCL and the YSR with reference to social/interpersonal problems, but not for academic stressors.

For girls, significant positive correlations were found between use of emotion-focused strategies and scores on the YSR subscales, specifically the Depressed and Delinquent scales, whereas significant negative correlations were found between problem-focused strategy use and scores on the YSR subscales, specifically the Depressed, Thought Disorder and Aggressive scales. Also, scores on the CBCL subscales, specifically the Anxious/Obsessive and Immature/Hyperactive scales were positively related to use of emotion-focused coping strategies, while, problem-focused strategy use was negatively correlated with the Depression-Withdrawal scale.

For boys, use of problem and emotion-focused strategies was not significantly related to scores on the YSR subscales. On the other hand, emotion-focused strategy use was positively related to scores on the CBCL subscales, specifically the Obsessive-Compulsive scale but negatively related to immature behavior, while problem-focused strategy use was not significantly correlated with scores on the CBCL subscales.

According to the authors, one of the reasons that significant correlations were found between emotional/behavioral problems and coping with social but not with academic stressors, is that the students in the sample may have had more at stake in

coping with social stress and thus, coping with social stress may have been more important in relation to problematic behaviors and emotions.

Ebata and Moos (1991) had 12 to 18 year old adolescents with rheumatic disease, adolescents with conduct disorder, adolescents with depression, and healthy controls complete the Coping Response Inventory-Youth Form (CRI-Y) to a self-reported stressful event. The CRI-Y assesses eight dimensions of coping that reflect two broad domains, approach and avoidant coping. Subjects also completed measures of psychological well-being (e.g., Weinberger Adjustment Inventory and Harter's Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents), psychological distress (e.g., WAI and Spielberger State Anxiety Inventory) and behavior problems (e.g., Deviant Behavior Scale and Youth Health and Daily Living Form). The researchers found that depressed and conduct disordered adolescents used more avoidance coping than did rheumatic diseased and healthy adolescents. No differences were found for the use of approach coping among the four groups. Overall, adolescents who used more approach coping such as positive reappraisal, guidance/support, and problem solving, had higher levels of well-being. On the other hand, adolescents who used more avoidant coping such as cognitive avoidance, resigned acceptance, and emotional discharge coping were more distressed.

Herman-Stahl, Stemmler and Petersen (1995) using a two-dimensional model of coping strategies: approach and avoidant coping had adolescents from grade 6 to 12 complete the Childhood Depression Inventory and describe how they coped with stressful events, during a one-year period. The researchers found that adolescents who used approach strategies: including problem solving and cognitive restructuring, reported the fewest symptoms of depression, whereas adolescents who used more avoidance strategies

reported the most depressive symptoms. In fact, if adolescents changed their coping style from approach to avoidance, their depressive episodes increased significantly and if they changed from avoidance to approach their depressive episodes decreased significantly.

These results are consistent with adult studies, Endler and Parker (1990) investigated the relationship between coping styles and psychological distress among undergraduate students. Subjects completed both a Multidimensional Coping Inventory, which was constructed to identify 3 types of coping styles: task, emotion, and avoidance oriented coping, as well as measures of depression and anxiety. The results indicated, emotion-oriented coping to be linked to greater incidence of depressive, and social and psychiatric symptoms; task oriented coping to have low to moderate negative correlations with psychological symptoms; and avoidance-oriented coping to have no relation to measures of distress.

As well, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) found that emotion-focused strategies, such as selective ignoring, denial, and withdrawal tended to exacerbate stress in the domains of marriage and parenting.

In summary, according to the transactional model of stress and coping, psychological/behavioral problems are related to the degree of fit between appraisals of control and the relative amount of problem and emotion-focused coping used. However, research examining the goodness of fit in an adolescent population has been extremely rare, with results showing some support. On the other hand, a large body of research has shown, that regardless of the match between appraisal and coping, emotion-focused strategies lead to greater distress, while problem-focused strategies lead to less distress.

In the present study I assessed adolescents' psychological adjustment by having participants complete The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, Meltzer & Bailey, 1998). It was expected that emotional/behavioral problems would be lower when adolescents matched their coping with their perceptions of control (e.g. high control, more problem-focused coping; low control, more emotion-focused coping) and higher when appraisal and coping were mismatched (e.g. high control, more emotion-focused coping; less control, more problem-focused coping).

Overview of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in coping among adolescents while controlling for gender differences in domain and appraisal. Research has found that boys and girls tend to report different domains of stress. Typically, boys report more academic hassles while girls report more interpersonal problems. Acknowledging this difference is important because, studies have found that problem content influences coping strategy use. Specifically, academic hassles have been found to elicit more problem-focused coping strategies while social stressors have been found to elicit more emotion-focused coping. Therefore, studies that have found gender differences in coping without controlling for gender differences in domain may have been flawed, as the results were most likely due to gender differences in the nature of the stressor. The present study controlled for gender differences in domain by giving both sexes the same three problem scenario vignettes (Parent, Peer and School) to appraise and cope with. It was expected that there would be no gender differences in coping strategy use when controlling for domain. If the results of the study do not support this prediction, an alternative explanation can be offered, that of socialization theory.

Socialization theory would argue that regardless of domain, boys and girls will still use different coping strategies. Particularly, girls would favor more emotion-focused coping and boys would favor more problem-focused coping.

It was also expected that specific domains would pull for/ be associated with specific coping strategies. Particularly, the school domain would lead to greater use of problem-focused strategies, while the interpersonal domains of parents and peers would lead to greater use of emotion-focused strategies.

Other studies have found that boys and girls appraise events differently. Specifically, girls tend to appraise events as more threatening than boys. This is important because appraisal influences the coping strategy used. In fact, events appraised as stressful, harmful, threatening, and less controllable are more likely to generate emotion-focused coping. In contrast, events appraised as challenging and controllable are more likely to generate problem-focused coping. Therefore, studies that found gender differences in coping without controlling for gender differences in appraisal may have actually been confounding gender differences in coping with gender differences in appraisal. In the present study, it was expected that there would be gender differences in primary appraisal but not in secondary appraisal. This study controlled for these gender differences in appraisal using covariate analysis. It was expected that there would be no gender differences in coping strategy use when gender differences in appraisal were controlled statistically.

A secondary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between psychological adjustment and the degree of fit between appraisals of control and the relative amount of problem and emotion-focused coping used. It was expected that

emotion/behavioral problems would be lower when adolescents matched their coping with their perceptions of control (e.g. high control, more problem-focused coping; low control, more emotion-focused coping) and higher when appraisal and coping are mismatched (e.g. high control, more emotion-focused coping; low control, more emotion-focused coping). If the results of the study do not support this prediction, an alternative explanation can be offered. The self-focused attention inherent in emotion-focused strategies would lead to an increase in emotional problems regardless of goodness of fit.

Methods

Participants

The present study consisted of two classes of Grade 9 students and two classes of Grade 10 students from three local high schools located in Southern Ontario, for a total of 92 participants (41 boys and 51 girls)¹. Although students were in fact recruited from two grade levels (9 and 10), they are presented herein as a sample of adolescents. All participants received parental consent before participating in the study (see Appendix A for a copy of the parental permission letter) and signed a permission form themselves (see Appendix B for a copy of the student permission letter).

Procedure

The students participated in a one time, group-testing session (approximately 20 minutes in length) conducted in their classrooms, during the school day, by a female experimenter (the author). During the testing session, students completed a series of paper and pencil measures. First, participants received each of the three problem scenario vignettes and completed appraisal and coping strategy questionnaires in relation to each

¹ Biological sex was used as a grouping factor, as the majority of boys (61%) identified themselves as masculine on a gender orientation questionnaire (Bowker, Gadbois & Cornock, 2003), while the majority of girls (57%) identified themselves as feminine.

of the three scenarios. The sequence of administration of the scenarios was varied to control for order effects. Second, participants completed a psychological adjustment questionnaire. At the end of the session all participants were thanked and debriefed. A detailed description of the measures used is provided in the next session.

Measures/Explanation

Problem scenarios. Students were administered three problem scenario vignettes that corresponded to the most common types of problems (School, Parents and Peers) reported by adolescents, as noted above. Controlling the type of stressor ensured that boys and girls were coping with the same event, which helped to make gender comparisons on these variables possible. The School stressor scenario involved the most common type of problem reported by adolescents under this category, concern about “bad” grades, taken from Spirito et al., (1991). The Peer stressor scenario involved the most common type of problem reported by adolescents under this category, peer rejection, as noted above. The Parent stressor scenario involved the most common type of problem reported by adolescents under this category, fighting and disagreements with parents, taken from Spirito et al., (1991). A copy of the three problem scenario vignettes is provided in Appendix C, D, and E.

Since the problem scenarios were given to the students without them having to come up with them, a check was needed to ensure that students in this sample typically experienced these scenarios. Therefore, for each of the three problem scenarios provided, students were asked to rate if the scenario ever happened to them (1= “never” to 5= “always”). A copy of the rating scale is presented in Appendix C, D and E.

Primary Appraisal. For each of the three problem scenarios provided, students were asked to rate the degree of Emotional Upset (1= “upset” to 5= “happy”); the degree of stressfulness (1= “not at all stressful” to 5= “very stressful”); the degree to which they viewed the scenarios as a Loss: an event in which something bad has already occurred (1= “not at all” to 5= “very”); the degree to which they viewed the scenarios as a Threat: an event that could have negative or undesirable consequences (1= “not at all” to 5= “very”); and the degree to which they viewed the scenarios as a Challenge: an event that could have positive or desirable consequences (1= “not at all” to 5= “very”) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A copy of the rating scale is provided in Appendix C, D and E.

Secondary Appraisal. For each of the three problem scenarios provided, students were asked to rate the degree to which they felt they could do something about the problem (1= “couldn’t do anything” to 5= “could do a lot”). A copy of the rating scale is provided in Appendix C, D and E.

Coping Strategies. To assess adolescent coping strategies, participants completed the Coping Questionnaire (Bowker, 2004). In this questionnaire coping is sub-divided into five dimensions: Problem-focused coping ($\alpha=.75$) (e.g. “I’d Compromise”), Negative to Others coping ($\alpha=.71$) (e.g. “I’d get back at my teacher somehow), Passive coping ($\alpha=.68$) (e.g. “I’d go watch television”), Minimizing/Reframe coping ($\alpha=.63$) (e.g. “I’d tell myself that it would be okay”) and Self-blame coping ($\alpha=.58$) (e.g. “I’d say that it was all my fault”). The original questionnaire contains 26 items but some items were deleted because they were not appropriate for the scenarios being assessed. The questionnaire was specifically designed for students in this age group. For each of the three problem scenarios provided, students were asked to rate the

degree which they used each of the coping items (1= “never” to 5= “always”). A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix C, D, and E.

Psychological Adjustment. To assess adolescent’s emotional and behavioral problems, participants completed The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2001; Goodman, Meltzer, Bailey, 1998). In the SDQ, adjustment is subdivided into five dimensions: Emotional Symptoms ($\alpha=.66$) (e.g. “I worry a lot”), Conduct Problems ($\alpha=.60$) (e.g. “I fight a lot”), Hyperactivity ($\alpha=.67$) (e.g. “I am easily distracted”), Peer Relationship Problems ($\alpha=.41$) (e.g. “I am usually on my own”) and Prosocial Behaviors ($\alpha=.66$) (e.g. “I usually share with others”). The SDQ contains 25 items and was specifically designed for students in this age group. Students were asked to rate the degree to which the items described them (“not true”, “somewhat true” and “certainly true”). A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix F.

For the purpose of this study, the dimension of Emotional Symptoms was renamed Internalizing Problems and the dimensions of Conduct Problems and Hyperactivity ($r=.38$, $p<.01$) were combined to form Externalizing Problems. The measure of Peer Relationship Problems was not used in any of the analyses.

Results

The main purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in coping among adolescents while controlling for gender differences in domain and appraisal. Gender differences in domain were controlled by giving boys and girls the same three hypothetical problem scenario vignettes to appraise and cope with. Gender differences in appraisal were controlled by taking the differences into account statistically, using covariate analysis. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine the relationship

between psychological adjustment and the degree of fit between appraisals of control and the relative amount of Problem and Emotion-focused coping used.

Familiarity With Problem Scenarios

Students were asked to rate the degree to which they had actually experienced each of the three problem scenarios in the past. The average rating for the Parent ($\underline{M}=2.82$) and School ($\underline{M}=2.70$) scenarios were slightly below the mid-point of the scale, suggesting that students sometimes experienced these specific hassles. On the other hand, for the Peer scenario the average rating was ($\underline{M}=1.91$) greatly below the mid-point of the scale, suggesting that students rarely experienced this specific hassle. Therefore, the Parent and School scenarios were more representative of the types of Daily Hassles adolescents actually experience than was the Peer scenario.

To examine possible domain and sex differences, a 3 (domain) by 2 (gender) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. For these analyses, domain (Parent, Peer, School) was considered a repeated measures factor since the same subjects completed rating for all the hassles. Sex was considered a between-subject factor. Before conducting tests of the various effects, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was conducted. This test indicated that the sphericity assumed was not valid for the effect involving domain ($p=.05$). Therefore, I have applied the Greenhouse-Geisser correction for the degrees of freedom for tests involving domain. The results are presented in Table 1a-1c.

The results revealed a significant main effect for domain ($F(1.88, 169.23)=16.62$, $p<.001$). Subsequent t-tests revealed that ratings of experience were significantly lower in the Peer domain than in the Parent or School domain. Thus, this specific Peer hassle was significantly less likely to have been experienced by students than the Parent or

School hassle. There was also a significant main effect of sex ($F(1, 90)=8.59, p<.01$).

Girls had significantly higher experience ratings than did boys across all domains, suggesting that girls were more likely to have experienced all three scenarios than boys.

There was also a significant sex by domain interaction ($F(1.88, 169.23)=4.64, p<.05$). A subsequent one-way ANOVA was conducted for each of the hassles, with sex as the independent variable and the experience rating as the dependant variable. The results found that girls had significantly higher experience ratings than boys in the Parent ($F(1, 90)=8.56, p<.01$) and School domain ($F(1, 90)=7.19, p<.01$). Thus, girls were more likely to have experienced the Parent and School hassles than boys.

Overall, the Peer hassle was significantly less likely to have been experienced than the Parent and School hassle. As well, girls were significantly more likely to report experiencing the Parent and School hassles than boys.

Table 1a Means and Standard Deviations for each of the experience ratings in each of the three domains

	Parent Domain		Peer Domain		School Domain	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Happened in the Past***	2.77	(1.37) _a	1.92	(.95) _b	2.65	(1.14) _a

*** $p < .001$

Note: Significant differences between domains as indicated by t-tests are indicated by different subscripts.

Table 1b Means and Standard Deviations for each of the experience ratings as a function of sex across the three domains

	Males		Females	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Happened in the Past**	2.23	(.99)	2.67	(.92)

**p<.01

Table 1c Means and Standard Deviations for each of the experience ratings in each of the three domains by sex

	Parent Domain		Peer Domain		School Domain	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Males	2.37	(1.20)	1.98	(.98)	2.34	(1.17)
Females**	3.18	(1.41)	1.86	(.92)	2.96	(1.04)

**p<.01

Primary and Secondary Appraisal

Students were asked to conduct a primary appraisal of each of the 3 problem scenarios. Students rated the degree to which they viewed the hassles as a Threat (an event that could have negative or undesirable consequences for you); a Loss (an event in which something bad has already occurred); a Challenge (an event that could have positive or desirable consequences for you); Emotionally Upsetting (if the same situation happened to you, how would it make you feel); and Stressful (if the same situation happened to you, how stressful would it be for you). Students were also asked to conduct a secondary appraisal of each of the 3 problem scenarios. Students rated the degree to which they felt they had Control (how much do you feel you could do something about the problem e.g. to change things) over the hassles.

Descriptive Analyses. The means and standard deviations for each of the primary and secondary appraisal dimensions in each of the three domains are presented in Table 2a. The average rating for perceived Emotional Upset, across all three domains was very high ($\underline{M}=4.39$) above the mid-point of the scale, suggesting that overall, students perceived all three of the hassles as very emotionally upsetting. The average rating for perceived Stressfulness ($\underline{M}=3.44$), and Loss ($\underline{M}=3.17$), across all three domains was above the mid-point of the scale, suggesting that overall, students perceived all three hassles as somewhat stressful, and somewhat as a situation in which something bad had already occurred. In contrast, the average rating for perceived Threat ($\underline{M}=2.53$) and Challenge ($\underline{M}=2.88$), across all three domains was below the mid-point of the scale, suggesting that overall, students rarely perceived the hassles as a situation that could have

bad or undesirable consequences for them or as a situation that could have good or desirable consequences for them.

The average rating for perceived Control ($M=3.76$), across all three domains was above the mid-point of the scale, suggesting that overall, students felt somewhat able to control the problems.

Overall, students perceived the hassles as emotionally upsetting, stressful, controllable and as a loss, however, they did not perceive the hassles as very threatening or challenging.

Sex and Domain Differences in Appraisal Ratings. To investigate possible differences in primary and secondary appraisal ratings as a function of domain and sex, a series of 3 (domain) by 2 (gender) repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted for each of the six appraisal dimensions (emotional upset, stressfulness, loss, threat, challenge and control). For these analyses, domain (Parent, Peer, School) was considered a repeated measures factor since the same subjects completed appraisal ratings, for each of the three domains. Sex was considered a between-subject factor, in order to examine any additional sex or sex by domain interactions. Before conducting tests of the various effects, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was conducted. This test indicated that the sphericity assumed was valid for all the effects involving domain, except for domain involving Emotional Upset ($p<.001$). Therefore, I have applied the Greenhouse-Geisser correction for the degrees of freedom for tests involving the latter. Results are presented in Table 2a-2c.

Domain Differences. The results revealed that all primary and secondary appraisal dimensions varied significantly by domain. For the primary appraisal

dimensions of Emotional Upset ($F(1.67, 150.22)=13.41, p<.001$), Stressfulness ($F(2, 180)=42.48, p<.001$), Loss ($F(2, 180)=25.09, p<.001$), Threat ($F(2, 178)=3.22, p<.05$) and Challenge ($F(2, 180)=7.89, p=.001$) there was a significant main effect of domain.

Subsequent t-tests revealed that the School domain was rated as being more emotionally upsetting, more stressful, more of a loss, more threatening and more challenging than the Peer or Parent domains, with the Peer domain rated as being the least stressful and the least of a loss.

For the secondary appraisal dimension of Control ($F(2, 180)=5.16, p<.01$), there was a significant main effect of domain. Subsequent t-tests revealed that the Peer domain was rated as being less controllable than either the School or the Parent domain.

Sex Differences. The results revealed that only a few primary appraisal dimensions varied significantly by sex. For the primary appraisal dimensions of Emotional Upset ($F(1, 90)=11.84, p=.001$), Stressfulness ($F(1, 90)=8.99, p<.01$) and Threat ($F(1, 90)=5.69, p<.05$), there was a significant main effect of sex. Girls rated the hassles as being more emotionally upsetting, more stressful and more of a threat than boys did. There were no significant sex differences for the Loss or Challenge appraisal dimensions. The secondary appraisal dimension of control did not vary significantly by sex.

Domain by Sex. Only one significant sex by domain interaction was found for the Loss appraisal dimension ($F(2, 180)=2.98, p=.05$). A subsequent one-way ANOVA was conducted for each of the hassles, with sex as the independent variable and the loss appraisal as the dependant variable. The results indicated that females had significantly higher ratings of perceived loss than males but only in the Parent domain ($F(1, 90)=6.43,$

$p < .05$). Thus, girls perceived the Parent domain as more of a situation in which something bad had already occurred than did boys. There were no other significant sex by domain interactions for primary or secondary appraisal.

In summary, primary and secondary appraisals varied as a function of domain. As well, consistent with other research, there were some gender differences in primary appraisal, with girls perceiving the scenarios as more upsetting, stressful and threatening, but no gender differences in secondary appraisal.

Table 2a Means and Standard Deviations for each of the primary and secondary appraisal dimensions in each of the three domains

	Parent Domain		Peer Domain		School Domain	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Emotional Upset***	4.27	(.79) _a	4.15	(.96) _a	4.68	(.61) _b
Stressfulness***	3.21	(1.10) _a	2.93	(1.31) _b	4.10	(.90) _c
Loss***	3.01	(1.09) _a	2.71	(1.21) _b	3.75	(1.06) _c
Threat*	2.35	(1.29) _a	2.44	(1.27) _a	2.74	(1.39) _b
Challenge***	2.57	(1.11) _a	2.89	(1.22) _a	3.19	(1.33) _b
Control**	3.91	(1.13) _a	3.51	(1.19) _b	3.90	(1.08) _a

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Note: Significant differences between domains as indicated by t-tests are indicated by different subscripts.

Table 2b Means and Standard Deviations for each of the primary and secondary appraisal dimensions as a function of sex across domain

	Females		Males	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Emotional Upset**	4.55	(.66)	4.19	(.88)
Stressfulness*	3.67	(1.09)	3.16	(1.02)
Loss	3.27	(1.09)	3.04	(1.07)
Threat*	2.75	(1.31)	2.27	(1.28)
Challenge	2.82	(1.33)	2.94	(1.07)
Control	3.63	(1.22)	3.92	(.99)

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Table 2c Means and Standard Deviations for the Loss dimension in each of the three domains by sex

	Parent Domain		Peer Domain		School Domain	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Males	2.73	(1.07)	2.56	(1.29)	3.83	(1.05)
Females**	3.29	(1.04)	2.86	(1.13)	3.67	(1.07)

**p<.01

Coping Strategy Use

Students were asked to rate the degree to which they used specific coping strategies for each of the 3 hassles. The five dimensions of coping assessed included; Problem-focused coping, Negative to Others coping, Passive coping, Minimize/Reframe coping and Self-blame coping. It was expected that coping strategy use would vary as a function of hassle domain (Parent, Peer, School) but not as a function of sex.

Descriptive Analysis. The means and standard deviations for each of the coping dimensions in each of the three domains are presented in Table 3a. The average rating for Negative to Others coping ($\underline{M}$ =2.60), Passive coping ($\underline{M}$ =2.52), Minimize/Reframe coping ($\underline{M}$ =2.70) and Self-Blame coping ($\underline{M}$ =2.1), across all three domains was below the mid-point of the scale. This suggests that overall, students rarely used these coping strategies to deal with the hassles. The average rating for Problem-focused ($\underline{M}$ =2.93) coping was at the mid-point of the scale. This suggests that overall, students sometimes used this coping strategy to deal with the hassles. Therefore, adolescents tended to use more Problem-focused coping to deal with the hassles than any of the other coping strategies.

Sex and Domain Differences in Coping. To investigate possible differences in coping strategy use as a function of domain and sex, a series of 3 (domain) by 2 (gender) repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted for each of the 5 coping dimensions (Negative to others, Passive, Problem-focused, Minimize/Reframe and Self-Blame). For these analyses, domain (Parent, Peer and School) was considered a repeated measures factor since the same subjects completed coping strategy use ratings for all of the domains. Sex was considered a between-subject factor, in order to examine any

additional sex or sex by domain interactions. Before conducting tests of the various effects, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was conducted. This test indicated that the sphericity assumed was valid for all the effects involving domain. Results are presented in Table 3a-3c.

Domain Differences. The results revealed that all coping dimensions varied significantly by domain. For Negative to Others coping ($F(2, 180)=18.58, p<.001$), Passive coping ($F(2, 180)=22.38, p<.001$) Minimize/Reframe coping ($F(2, 180)=9.25, p<.001$), Problem-focused coping ($F(2, 180)=47.35, p<.001$) and Self-blame coping ($F(2, 180)=21.08, p<.001$) there was a significant main effect of domain. Subsequent t-tests revealed that Negative to Others, Passive and Minimize/Reframe coping were all used less often in the School domain than in the other two domains, with Passive coping being used the most in the Peer domain. Problem-focused coping was used most often in the School domain but the least in the Peer domain. Finally, Self-blame coping was used less often in the Peer domain than in the other two domains.

Sex Differences. The results revealed that only one coping dimension varied significantly by sex. For Self-Blame coping ($F(1, 90)=8.045, p<.01$) there was a significant main effect of sex. Girls used more self-blame coping to deal with the hassles than did boys.

Domain by Sex. Only one significant sex by domain interaction was found for the Negative to Others coping dimension ($F(2, 180)=11.67, p<.001$). A subsequent one-way ANOVA was conducted for each of the hassles, with sex as the independent variable and Negative to Others coping as the dependant variable. The results indicated that girls had significantly higher ratings of Negative to Others coping than boys but only in the

Parent domain ($F(1, 91)=8.48, p<.01$). Thus, girls used more Negative to Others coping in the Parent domain than boys did. There were no other significant sex by domain interactions.

In summary, as expected, while girls used Self-blame coping more often than did boys, in general, once domain was controlled boys and girls did not differ with respect to coping strategy use.

Table 3a Means and Standard Deviations for each of the coping dimensions in each of the three domains

	Parent Domain		Peer Domain		School Domain	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Negative Coping***	2.66	(.95) _a	2.87	(.90) _a	2.28	(.93) _b
Passive Coping***	2.56	(.74) _a	2.80	(.75) _b	2.20	(.70) _c
Problem-focused Coping***	2.91	(.68) _a	2.57	(.74) _b	3.30	(.74) _c
Minimize Coping***	2.89	(.73) _a	2.77	(.82) _a	2.45	(.74) _b
Self-Blame Coping***	2.22	(.61) _a	1.86	(.64) _b	2.22	(.60) _a

*** $p < .001$

Note: Significant differences between domains as indicated by t-tests are indicated by different subscripts.

Table 3b Means and Standard Deviations for each of the coping dimensions as a function of sex across domain

	Females		Males	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Negative Coping	2.61	(.91)	2.60	(.91)
Passive Coping	2.56	(.69)	2.48	(.76)
Problem-focused Coping	2.90	(.70)	2.96	(.74)
Minimize Coping	2.58	(.81)	2.70	(.69)
Self-blame**	2.24	(.63)	1.96	(.56)

** $p < .01$

Table 3c Means and Standard Deviations for the Negative to Others coping dimension in each of the three domains by sex

	Parent Domain		Peer Domain		School Domain	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Males	2.38	(.93)	3.03	(.89)	2.38	(.91)
Females***	2.94	(.90)	2.71	(.89)	2.17	(.95)

***p<.001

Sex Differences in Coping Strategy with Appraisal Ratings as Covariates. It was expected that if both problem domain and primary and secondary appraisal were controlled, there would be no gender differences in coping strategy use. The most important measure of primary appraisal is degree of stressfulness. Since degree of stressfulness varied as a function of sex, it was used as a covariate.² On the other hand, the secondary appraisal variable of control did not vary as a function of sex and therefore was not used as a covariate. Due to the fact that only one coping dimension (Self-blame) varied significantly by sex, only one analysis was conducted.

To investigate the possible difference in coping strategy use as a function of sex, when stressfulness was controlled, a 3 (domain) by 2 (gender) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted for Self-blame coping. For this analysis, domain (Parent, Peer and School) was considered a repeated measures factor since the same subjects completed Self-blame coping strategy use ratings for all of the domains. Sex was considered a between-subject factor, in order to examine any additional sex or sex by domain interactions. Before conducting tests of the various effects, Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was conducted. This test indicated that the sphericity assumed was valid for all the effects involving domain. Results are presented in Table 4.

Sex Differences. The results revealed that Self-blame coping still varied significantly by sex, in spite of controlling for gender differences in perceived stressfulness. For Self-Blame coping ($F(1, 87)=5.05, p<.05$) there was a significant main effect of sex. Girls still used more self-blame coping to deal with the hassles than males

² Emotion Upset and Threat were also used as covariates as both these variables differed significantly by gender. However, girls were still more likely to use Self-blame coping despite controlling for gender differences in emotional upset and threat appraisals.

did. Therefore, gender differences in perceived stressfulness cannot account for gender differences in Self-blame coping. There were no other significant results.

Table 4 Means and Standard Deviations for Self-blame coping as a function of sex across domain, while controlling for stressfulness

	Females		Males	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Self-blame Coping*	2.22	(.07)	1.98	(.08)

* $p < .05$

Psychological Adjustment

Participants were asked to rate their degree of psychological functioning. The three dimensions assessed included; Internalizing Symptoms, Externalizing Symptoms, and Prosocial Behaviour. It was expected that emotional/behavioural problems would be lower when adolescents “matched” their coping with their perceptions of control (e.g. high control, more problem-focused coping; low control, more emotion-focused coping) and higher when appraisal and coping were mismatched (e.g. high control, more emotion-focused coping; less control, more problem-focused coping)

Descriptive Analyses. The means and standard deviations for each of the psychological adjustment dimensions are presented in Table 5. The average ratings for Internalizing Problems, Externalizing Problems and Prosocial Behaviour were all within the normal range for that scale. This suggested that overall, participants were not suffering from any mental health disorders with regard to these psychological adjustment dimensions.

Sex Differences in Psychological Adjustment. To investigate possible differences in psychological adjustment as a function of sex, a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted, with sex as the independent variable and various psychological adjustments dimensions (Internalizing Problems, Externalizing Problems and Prosocial Behaviour) as the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 6. For the Internalizing Problems dimension, there was a significant effect of sex ($F(1, 90)=3.83, p=.05$). Girls had significantly higher ratings of Internalizing problems than did boys, suggesting that girls reported experiencing more sadness and worry than did boys. There were no significant sex differences for Externalizing Problems or Prosocial Behaviour.

Coping and Psychological Adjustment. Correlational analyses were conducted to evaluate the relationship between the various coping dimensions in each domain and psychological adjustment³. The results are presented in Table 7. Consistent across all three domains, a strong positive relationship was observed between ratings of Self-blame coping and Internalizing problems. Across domains, then, the more an individual used Self-blame coping to deal with the hassles, the more likely s/he was to report experiencing Internalizing problems. Across domains, a strong positive relationship was also observed between ratings of Negative to Others coping and Externalizing problems. This suggests that, the more an individual uses Negative to Others coping to deal with the hassles, the more likely s/he is to report experiencing Externalizing problems. Also across domain, a strong positive relationship was observed between ratings of Problem-focused coping and Prosocial behaviour. This suggests that, the more an individual uses problem-focused coping to deal with the hassles, the more likely s/he is to report taking part in pro-social behaviour.

Within both the Peer and School domains, a positive relationship was observed between ratings of Passive coping and Internalizing problems, indicating, that the more an individual uses Passive coping to deal with the hassles in these domains, the more likely s/he is to report experiencing Internalizing problems. There was no significant relation between these two variables, however, within the Parent domain. Within the Parent and School domain, a negative relationship was observed between ratings of Problem-focused coping and Externalizing problems, indicating, that the more an individual uses Problem-focused coping to deal with the hassles, the less likely s/he is to

³Correlational analyses were also conducted separately for boys and girls. Results were consistent for both sexes, although the strength of the relationships was somewhat stronger for girls than for boys.

report experiencing Externalizing problems. There was no significant relation between these two variables, however, within the Peer domain.

Within the school domain, a significant negative correlation was observed between ratings of Negative to Others coping and Prosocial behaviour, indicating, that the more an individual uses Negative to Others coping to deal with this hassle, the less likely s/he is to report taking part in Prosocial behaviour.

In summary, the relationship between coping and adjustment was quite consistent across domain. Internalizing problems were related to the use of Self-blame coping strategies; Externalizing problems were consistently related to the use of Negative to Others coping; and Problem-focused coping was consistently related to Prosocial functioning.

Table 5 Means and Standard Deviations for each of the psychological adjustment dimensions

	<u>M</u>	(SD)	Normal Range
Internalizing Problems	3.76	(2.53)	0-5
Externalizing Problems	3.52	(1.56)	0-5
Prosocial Behaviour	7.57	(1.78)	6-10

Table 6 Means and Standard Deviations for each of the psychological adjustment dimensions as a function of sex

	Females		Males	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems*	4.22	(2.67)	3.20	(2.24)
Externalizing Problems	3.55	(1.49)	3.48	(1.67)
Prosocial Behaviour	7.86	(1.65)	7.20	(1.90)

* $p < .05$

Table 7 Correlation Matrix between Coping dimensions and Psychological adjustment by domain

Parent Hassle (N=92)			
	Internalizing	Externalizing	Prosocial
Negative to Others Coping	.20	+.22*	-.19
Passive Coping	.09	-.03	-.04
Problem-focused Coping	.10	-.29**	+.42**
Minimize Coping	.15	-.03	-.10
Self-blame Coping	+.41**	.10	.18
Peer Hassle (N=92)			
	Internalizing	Externalizing	Prosocial
Negative to Others Coping	.07	+.23*	-.05
Passive Coping	+.25*	-.11	.03
Problem-focused Coping	-.04	-.19	+.31**
Minimize Coping	-.01	-.05	-.09
Self-blame Coping	+.39**	.07	-.05
School Hassle (N=92)			
	Internalizing	Externalizing	Prosocial
Negative to Others Coping	.01	+.38**	-.24*
Passive Coping	+.27**	.12	-.07
Problem-focused Coping	-.01	-.26*	+.31**
Minimize Coping	.12	.15	-.17
Self-blame Coping	+.52**	.12	.13

*p<.05

**p<.01

Coping, Control and Psychological Adjustment. To investigate the relation of psychological adjustment to the match between appraisals of control and coping, a series of 2 (control) by 2 (coping) ANOVAs were conducted for the Parent, Peer and School domain. Following, Compas et al., (1987), appraisals of control for the Parent, Peer and School domain were dichotomized using median split procedures, which created a set of independent variables with two levels (high and low) each. For the purpose of these analyses, Minimize coping, Self-blame coping and Passive coping were grouped together to form “Emotion-focused coping”. Emotion-focused coping, Problem-focused coping and Negative to Others coping for the Parent, Peer and School domain were dichotomized using median split procedures, which created a set of independent variables with two levels (high and low) each. Externalizing problems, Internalizing problems and Prosocial behaviour were used as dependant variables. The presence of an interaction between coping and control would indicate that emotional/behavioural problems are related to the degree of fit between appraisals of control and coping. The results are presented in Table 8a-c.

With regard to control differences in the Parent, Peer and School domain, there were no significant results for any of the psychological adjustment dimensions.

With regard to Problem-focused coping differences, Prosocial behaviour and Externalizing problems varied significantly by Problem-focused coping strategy use. For Prosocial behaviour there was a significant main effect for Problem-focused coping in the Parent ($F(1, 87)=19.26, p<.001$), Peer ($F(1, 87)=6.67, p<.05$) and School ($F(1, 87)=4.40, p<.05$) domains. Individuals who were high on Problem-focused coping in the all three domains had significantly higher ratings of Prosocial behaviour than individuals who

were low on Problem-focused coping. This suggests, that individuals who use more Problem focused coping to deal with the hassles, take part in more Prosocial behaviour than individuals who use less Problem-focused coping to deal with the hassles.

For Externalizing Problems there was a significant main effect for Problem focused coping in the Parent ($F(1, 88)=11.28, p=.001$) and School ($F(1, 88)=4.567, p<.05$) domains. Individuals who were low on Problem-focused coping in the Parent and School domains had significantly higher ratings of Externalizing problems than individuals who were high on Problem-focused coping. This suggests, that individuals who use less Problem-focused coping to deal with the Parent and School hassle experience more Externalizing problems than individuals who use more Problem focused coping to deal with the two hassles.

There were no significant Problem-focused coping differences in the Parent, Peer, or School domain for Internalizing problems.

With regards to Emotion-focused coping differences, Internalizing problems varied significantly by Emotion-focused coping strategy use. For Internalizing Problems there was a significant main effect for Emotion-focused coping in the Peer ($F(1, 88)=5.20, p<.05$) and School ($F(1, 88)=5.68, p<.05$) domain. Individuals who were high on Emotion-focused coping in the Peer and School domain had significantly higher ratings of Internalizing problems than individuals who were low on Emotion-focused coping. This suggests, that individuals who use more Emotion-focused coping to deal with the Peer and School hassles experience more Internalizing problems than individuals who use less Emotion-focused coping to deal with the two hassles.

There were no significant Emotion-focused coping differences in the Parent, Peer and School domains for Externalizing problems or Prosocial behaviour.

With regards to Negative to Others coping differences, Externalizing problems varied significantly by Negative to Others coping strategy use. For Externalizing Problems there was a significant main effect for Negative to Others coping in the Parent ($F(1, 88)=8.88, p<.01$) and Peer ($F(1, 88)=3.91, p=.05$) domains. Individuals who were high on Negative to Others coping in the Parent and Peer domain had significantly higher ratings of Externalizing problems than individuals who were low on Negative to Others coping. This suggests, that individuals who use more Negative to Others coping to deal with the Parent or Peer hassles experience more Externalizing problems than individuals who use less Negative to Others coping to deal with the two hassles.

There were no significant Negative to Others coping differences in the Parent, Peer and School domains for Internalizing problems or Prosocial behaviour.

There were also no significant control by coping interactions for any of the psychological adjustment indices in any of the three hassles.

The results did not support the expectation that emotional/behavioral problems would be lower when adolescents “matched” their coping with their perception of control and higher when appraisal and coping were mismatched, as there were no interactions present. Instead, consistent with the correlational analyses, Problem-focused coping was consistently related to Prosocial behaviour; Internalizing problems related to the use of Emotion-focused coping; and Externalizing problems were consistently related to the use of Negative to Others coping.

Table 8a Means and Standard Deviations for each of the psychological adjustment dimensions as a function of Emotion-focused coping by domain

Parent Hassle (N=92)				
	Emotion-focused coping			
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems	2.99	(2.29)	4.00	(2.59)
Externalizing Problems	3.30	(1.47)	3.66	(1.61)
Prosocial Behaviour	7.60	(1.87)	7.54	(1.76)

* $p < .05$

Peer Hassle (N=92)				
	Emotion-focused coping			
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems*	3.15	(2.48)	4.33	(2.45)
Externalizing Problems	3.62	(1.54)	3.46	(1.60)
Prosocial Behaviour	7.31	(1.76)	7.80	(1.80)

* $p < .05$

Table 8a (cont)

School Hassle (N=92)				
	Emotion-focused coping			
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems*	2.88	(2.20)	4.19	(2.58)
Externalizing Problems	3.53	(1.46)	3.45	(1.62)
Prosocial Behaviour	7.47	(1.81)	7.73	(1.78)

* $p < .05$

Table 8b Means and Standard Deviations for each of the psychological adjustment dimensions as a function of Problem-focused coping by domain

Parent Hassle (N=92)				
	Problem-focused coping			
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems	3.34	(2.44)	4.15	(2.57)
Externalizing Problems**	4.12	(1.53)	3.00	(1.45)
Prosocial Behaviour***	6.76	(1.70)	8.35	(1.56)

*** $p < .001$

** $p = .001$

Peer Hassle (N=92)				
	Problem-focused coping			
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems	3.81	(2.73)	3.37	(2.27)
Externalizing Problems	3.81	(1.56)	3.38	(1.55)
Prosocial Behaviour*	7.16	(1.83)	8.17	(1.57)

* $p < .05$

Table 8b (cont)

School Hassle (N=92)				
	Problem-focused coping			
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems	3.33	(2.97)	3.87	(2.17)
Externalizing Problems*	3.95	(1.34)	3.23	(1.67)
Prosocial Behaviour*	7.12	(1.61)	7.93	(1.85)

* $p < .05$

Table 8c Means and Standard Deviations for each of the psychological adjustment dimensions as a function of Negative to Others coping by domain

Parent Hassle (N=92)				
Negative to Others coping				
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems	3.37	(2.25)	4.12	(2.90)
Externalizing Problems**	3.14	(1.46)	4.14	(1.58)
Prosocial Behaviour	7.84	(1.65)	7.09	(1.94)

** $p < .01$

Peer Hassle (N=92)				
Negative to Others coping				
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems	3.66	(2.65)	3.97	(2.27)
Externalizing Problems*	3.29	(1.46)	3.97	(1.69)
Prosocial Behaviour	7.53	(1.70)	7.66	(1.99)

* $p = .05$

Table 8c (cont)

School Hassle (N=92)				
Negative to Others coping				
	Low		High	
	<u>M</u>	(SD)	<u>M</u>	(SD)
Internalizing Problems	3.94	(2.72)	3.48	(2.32)
Externalizing Problems	3.19	(1.39)	3.73	(1.67)
Prosocial Behaviour	7.79	(1.79)	7.50	(1.76)

*p<.05

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in coping among adolescents while controlling for gender differences in domain and appraisal. It has been argued that gender differences in coping strategy use are due primarily to the fact that boys and girls tend to report different hassles, and different hassles lead to different types of coping strategies.

Research which has examined Daily Hassles during adolescence has found that boys and girls differ with respect to the types of events reported. Typically, boys report more academic hassles, while girls report more interpersonal problems. The difference in stressors reported by boys and girls is important because studies have found that stressor content influences the coping strategies used to deal with the hassle. Specifically, academic hassles have been found to elicit more problem-focused coping strategies while social stressors have been found to elicit more emotion-focused coping. Therefore, studies that found gender differences in coping without controlling for gender differences in domain or hassle type have been flawed or potentially inaccurate.

Coping and Gender

The present study controlled for the different hassles reported by boys and girls by providing all participants with the same three hypothetical problem scenario vignettes in the three most common hassle domains (Parent, Peer and School). It was expected that there would be no gender differences in coping strategy use when controlling for domain. Consistent with this expectation, only one main effect of gender differences was found.

Specifically, girls were more likely than boys to use Self-blame coping. At a domain specific level, girls were more likely than boys to use Negative to Others coping

but only in the family domain. There were no gender differences with respect to Problem-focused coping, Minimize/Reframe coping or Passive coping. Overall, these findings suggest that when domain is controlled, gender differences in coping are minimal and, previous studies which have reported gender differences in coping without controlling for gender differences in domain, should be interpreted with caution. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Compas et al., (1988), Porter and Stone (1995) and Spirito et al., (1991) who found minimal gender differences in coping, when controlling for domain.

Consistent with the research of Billings and Moos (1981), Folkman and Lazarus (1980) and Spirito et al., (1991) coping strategy use did vary significantly as a function of domain. Specifically, Negative to Others, Passive and Minimize/Reframe coping were used less often to cope with hassles in the School domain, while Passive coping was used most often in response to hassles in the Peer domain. Problem-focused coping was used most in the School domain and least in the Peer domain. Finally, Self-blame coping was used most in the Peer domain as compared to the other two domains. Generally, there was a trend to use more emotion-focused coping strategies to deal with social stressors and more problem-focused coping strategies to deal with school stressors.

How can we explain the sex differences that were present? It is possible that girls used Negative to Others coping in the Family domain more often, because the relationship between girls and their parents is more stressful and marked with more conflict during this time period (i.e. early to mid-adolescence). According to adolescent theory, girls tend to mature, on average two to three years ahead of boys, and this may lead to heightened tension between girls and their parents between 14 and 15 years of

age, while the peak conflict period may be later for boys (Hill, 1988; Steinberg, 1981, 1988; Tanner, 1981).

Girls were also more likely to use Self-blame coping to deal with hassles than boys, even after controlling for appraisals differences and stressor domain. This finding supports the alternate theory of gender socialization, which argues, that regardless of domain, boys would use more problem-focused coping strategies and girls would use more emotion-focused strategies. It is possible that girls are taught to blame themselves more or made to feel guilty about things more so than boys.

Appraisal and Gender

It was also argued that some of the gender differences found in previous research could have been confounded with gender differences in appraisal. Some research has found that boys and girls appraise events differently. Specifically, girls tend to appraise events as more threatening than boys. Acknowledging that boys and girls might appraise events differently is important because according to the transactional model of stress and coping, appraisal affects the coping strategy used. In fact, events appraised as stressful, harmful, threatening and less controllable are more likely to generate emotion-focused coping. In contrast, events appraised as challenging and controllable are more likely to generate problem-focused coping. Therefore, if boys and girls appraise events differently and appraisal influences the coping strategy used, then studies that found gender differences in coping without controlling for gender differences in appraisal may be confounding gender differences in coping with gender differences in appraisal.

The present study controlled for gender differences in appraisal by taking the differences into account statistically using covariate analysis. Consistent with

expectations, there were some gender differences in primary appraisal but not in secondary appraisal. Girls were more likely than boys to appraise events as stressful, emotionally upsetting and as a loss. On the other hand, no gender differences emerged for appraisals of threat or challenge. There were also no gender differences in control. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Compas et al., (1988), Bowker et al., (2000) and Ptacek et al., (1992) who also found no gender differences in secondary appraisal.

Contrary to expectation, controlling for stressfulness (the measure of primary appraisal used herein) did not minimize the gender difference found in coping. Girls were still more likely to use Self-blame coping than boys. As discussed above, this suggests that the use of Self-blame coping may be more related to gender role socialization and reflective of an 'actual' gender difference in coping, a tendency for women to blame themselves and take more responsibility for stressful events than men do.

Adjustment and Coping

A secondary focus of this study was to examine the relation between psychological adjustment and the 'match' between appraisals of control and coping. It was argued that emotional/behavioral problems would be lower when adolescents 'matched' their coping with their perceptions of control (e.g. high control, more problem-focused coping; low control, more emotion-focused coping) and higher when appraisal and coping were mismatched (e.g. high control, more emotion-focused coping; less control, more problem-focused coping). Contrary to expectations, no interactions were found between appraisals of control and the amount of problem-focused, emotion focused or negative to others coping in any of the three domains for any of the psychological

adjustment indices. These results are not consistent with the findings of Compas et al., (1988).

Instead, the results indicated that there were consistent relationships between coping and adjustment, across hassle domain. Problem-focused coping was consistently related to more positive outcomes (e.g., greater incidence of prosocial behaviors); while Emotion-focused and Negative coping strategy use were consistently related to less positive outcomes, such as Internalizing and Externalizing problems.

These results are consistent with the research of Billings and Moos (1981), Broderick and Korteland (2002), Compas et al., (1988) and Ebata and Moos (1991), who also found that greater use of Emotion-focused coping strategies was related to more Internalizing problems, while greater use of Problem-focused coping was related to lower levels of Internalizing and Externalizing problems. These findings support the alternate theory that irrespective of the goodness of fit, emotion-focused coping strategies are associated with higher levels of distress because they increase self-focused attention, which interferes with memory and concentration and leads individuals to recall negative events more frequently and more strongly.

However, not all Emotion-focused coping strategies are 'created equal' and there are certainly some hassles which might be best responded to using Emotion-focused strategies, such as avoidance. There are many examples of stressors (e.g. being teased by someone) that we truly cannot do anything about and it would be better and make more sense to walk away. Therefore, collapsing Emotion-focused strategies (Minimizing, Passive, and Avoidance) together as we did in the latter section of this study might not be

the best way to examine the goodness of fit and maybe look at different types of emotion-focused strategies would be better.

With respect to the use of Negative coping strategies, it is perhaps not surprising that Negative coping was consistently related to psychological difficulties, notably Externalizing problems. Using retaliation and confrontation as typical responses to stressful events is undoubtedly not a socially acceptable way of responding to daily hassles, although it is a strategy often endorsed by adolescents.

Research by Bowker (2004) suggests that, in certain circumstances, being direct and confrontational in response to peer conflict may actually enhance friendship stability for girls. That is, dealing directly with friendship conflict, rather than avoiding the conflict or minimizing its severity, may sometimes be the most adaptive way of responding. Once again, the specific hassle domain, as well as the problem content, appears to be critical to include in analyses.

Limitations and Future Direction

One of the limitations of the study is that boys and girls did not experience the problem scenario vignettes equally. Rather, girls reported having experienced the hassles more so than boys. This is a problem because the events probably did not evoke the same emotion in boys and girls and it is unclear whether this is an actual sex difference in emotional expressiveness or an artifact of being less familiar with that scenario. Therefore, future studies should aim to find scenarios that are typical of both boys' and girls' everyday experience.

Of course, the problem scenarios presented were hypothetical and individuals reported how they would typically cope when confronted with that specific problem,

unfortunately, this does not mean that this is the way adolescents would actually cope in reality, so we need to be cautious when generalizing the results to the real world.

Although it was found that when boys and girls cope with the same stressor, gender differences are minimal, it does not change the fact that boys and girls consistently report different stressors. Specifically, girls report more interpersonal stressors and boys report more academic stressors. Gender socialization would argue that it is not the case that boys do not experience interpersonal stressors and girls do not experience academic stressor, it is rather that interpersonal stressors are more salient to girls and school stressors are more salient to boys because they are socialized to view these stressors as more important. These different hassles are associated with different coping strategies and in the end, it may still be the case that boys use more problem-focused coping and girls use more emotion-focused coping because of the very hassles they report.

Therefore, if evidence suggests that using more Emotion-focused coping is associated with more internalizing problems and girls use more emotion-focused coping than they should also be at risk for developing more emotional problems. In fact, in the present study girls were significantly more likely to report Internalizing problems than boys. These findings are consistent with other research which reports girls are two to three times more likely to suffer from depression than boys (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987, 1990).

Conclusion

Together with research by Porter and Stone (1995), and Compas et al., (1988), the findings from the present study provide support of the importance of taking into account

the stressor domain when examining gender differences in coping. When gender differences in domain are controlled, gender differences in coping strategy use are minimal. Girls were more likely to report using more Self-blame coping than boys. This gender difference remained even after statistically controlling for gender differences in stressfulness. Previous studies which have reported gender differences in coping without controlling for gender differences in domain, should be interpreted with caution.

The results of this study also indicated that regardless of the fit between control and coping, Emotion-focused coping was related to more Internalizing problems, while Problem-focused coping was related to more Prosocial behavior.

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Appendix A

Parent Permission Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian(s),

The purpose of this letter is to request permission for your son/daughter to participate in a research project conducted through Carleton University. The focus of this research is on adolescent's daily hassles and how they cope with these hassles. We know that stress has a significant impact on health and well-being. Daily hassles are the stressors which occur most frequently, and include such things as; having to do a presentation in class, having a disagreement with a classmate or writing a test. This study will examine how adolescents aged 14 to 15 cope with stress, and how this may vary for boys versus girls.

Students will participate in a group testing session (about 25 minutes) at the school, during regular class time, where they will complete a series of paper and pencil questionnaires. Scheduling will be done at the teacher's convenience to minimize interference with the daily school routine. They will be given hypothetical scenarios representing typical daily hassles (e.g., failing a test and being grounded by your parents) and will be asked to indicate if the situation has happened to them, how stressful it would be and how they would cope with the problem. In addition, they will be given a questionnaire to assess current health and well-being. Given that some students might have experienced these scenarios and could find them somewhat unpleasant, they will be allowed to stop participating at any time.

This research has been approved by the ethics committee of Carleton University, your adolescent's principal and teacher. All information collected in this study will be confidential and participation is totally voluntary. The responses of your son/daughter will not affect their grades or schoolwork in any way. Only adolescents with written parental consent will be allowed to participate.

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I hope that you will agree to your son/daughter's participation in this project on such an increasingly relevant issue. If you allow your son/daughter to participate, please sign this consent form.

Thank-you for your time and help.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anne Bowker Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Carleton University

Carmelinda Longo B.Sc
Master's Candidate of Psychology
Carleton University

Appendix A (cont.)

The information collected for this project is confidential and protected under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, 1989.

I have read the letter concerning research on adolescent's stress and coping to be conducted by Carmelinda Longo of Carleton University, under the supervisor of Dr. Anne Bowker. I understand that all information is gathered on this project is to be used for research purposes only and will be considered confidential.

Name of Child: _____

Birthdate: _____

Permission Granted: Yes _____ No _____

Signature: _____

Appendix B

Student Permission Form

Name _____

Birthdate _____

School _____

Teacher _____

Please read and sign the following statement if you wish to be in our study:

I understand that I have been asked to be in a research study that Carmelinda Longo is doing about stress and coping, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Bowker.

I know that if I agree to be in the study I will be asked to fill in some questionnaires about myself.

I know that I do not have to be in the study, and that even if I start to take part in it I can quit at any time.

I know that I can ask any questions about the study before I participate.

I also know that my answers will be kept private and will not be shown to anyone, not even to my teachers, my parents or my friends. Only Carmelinda Longo and her supervisor Dr. Anne Bowker will know what I say on the questionnaire.

Sign _____

Date _____

Appendix C

Hassles With School

Imagine the following situation:

You've been having difficulty in one of your classes. For the last test you just had, you studied really hard, did all your homework, and paid attention in class. The teacher returns the test and you discover that in spite of your effort you failed the test.

Answer the following questions with regards to the situation above, by circling the number that best describes how you feel.

1) Has this situation happened to you in the past?

Never		Sometimes		Always
1	2	3	4	5

2) Imagine the same situation happened to you, how would it make you feel?

Upset		Neutral		Happy
1	2	3	4	5

3) Imagine the same situation happened to you, how stressful would it be for you?

Not at all Stressful		Somewhat Stressful		Very Stressful
1	2	3	4	5

4) A **loss** is a situation in which something bad has already happened. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a loss?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C (cont.)

ii) A **threat** is a situation that could have bad or undesirable consequence for you. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a threat?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

iii) A **challenge** is a situation that could have good or desirable consequences for you. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a challenge?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

5) How much do you feel you could do something about the problem (e.g., to **change** things)?

Couldn't do Anything		Something		I could do A lot about it
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C (cont.)

Coping Questionnaire
(Hassles with School)

There are lots of different ways a person can deal with this school hassle. We've listed some of them below. We call them coping strategies. Read through each of the coping strategies listed below, and think of each one as a possible way to solve this problem. After each strategy there is a scale that goes from 1 to 5.

"1" means you'd **never** use this strategy

"2" means that you would use this strategy **rarely**

"3" means that **sometimes** you would use this strategy

"4" means that you'd **often** use this strategy

"5" means that you'd almost **always** use this strategy

Circle the number on the scale that best describes how much you'd use each strategy to deal with this school hassle.

	Never		Sometimes		Always
1. I'd try to solve the problem myself	1	2	3	4	5
2. I'd get mad at the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
3. I'd try not to think about it	1	2	3	4	5
4. I'd go hang out with my friends	1	2	3	4	5
5. I'd pretend that it never happened	1	2	3	4	5
6. I'd just stay away from the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
7. I wouldn't do anything	1	2	3	4	5
8. I'd go talk to my friends about it	1	2	3	4	5
9. I'd ask my parents what they thought	1	2	3	4	5
10. I'd try to work it out with my teacher	1	2	3	4	5
11. I'd go watch television	1	2	3	4	5
12. I'd get back at my teacher somehow	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C (cont.)

	Never		Sometimes		Always
13. I'd cry	1	2	3	4	5
14. I'd read a book	1	2	3	4	5
15. I'd think it was no big deal	1	2	3	4	5
16. I'd say that it was my teacher's fault	1	2	3	4	5
17. I'd talk to a teacher	1	2	3	4	5
18. I'd just make a joke of the whole thing	1	2	3	4	5
19. I'd say that it was all my fault	1	2	3	4	5
20. I'd want to hurt myself	1	2	3	4	5
21. I'd wonder why it happened	1	2	3	4	5
22. I'd think that these things always happen to me	1	2	3	4	5
23. I'd think that I was just having a bad day on the day of the test	1	2	3	4	5
24. I'd tell myself that it would be okay	1	2	3	4	5
25. I'd compromise (try and work something out)	1	2	3	4	5
26. I'd think that I had done something wrong	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D

Hassles with Peers

Imagine the following situation:

For the past couple of weeks in gym class you've been playing a sport that you're not really good at. Every time the ball comes to you, you miss it and everyone in the class teases you about this. You once again have gym class and as the students form into two teams, someone looks at you and says, "You suck."

Answer the following questions with regards to the situation above, by circling the number that best describes how you feel.

1) Has this situation happened to you in the past?

Never		Sometimes		Always
1	2	3	4	5

2) Imagine the same situation happened to you, how would it make you feel?

Upset		Neutral		Happy
1	2	3	4	5

3) Imagine the same situation happened to you, how stressful would it be for you?

Not at all Stressful		Somewhat Stressful		Very Stressful
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D (cont.)

4) A **loss** is a situation in which something bad has already occurred. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a loss?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

ii) A **threat** is a situation that could have bad or undesirable consequences for you. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a threat?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

iii) A **challenge** is a situation that could have good or desirable consequences for you. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a challenge?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

5) How much do you feel you could do something about the problem (e.g. to **change** things)?

Couldn't do Anything		Something		I could do A lot about it
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D (cont.)

Coping Questionnaire
(Hassles with Peers)

There are lots of different ways a person can deal with this peer hassle. We've listed some of them below. We call them coping strategies. Read through each of the coping strategies listed below, and think of each one as a possible way to solve this problem. After each strategy there is a scale that goes from 1 to 5.

“1” means you'd **never** use this strategy

“2” means that you would use this strategy **rarely**

“3” means that **sometimes** you would use this strategy

“4” means that you'd **often** use this strategy

“5” means that you'd almost **always** use this strategy

Circle the number on the scale that best describes how much you'd use each strategy to deal with this peer hassle.

	Never		Sometimes		Always
1. I'd try to solve the problem myself	1	2	3	4	5
2. I'd get mad at my classmate	1	2	3	4	5
3. I'd try not to think about it	1	2	3	4	5
4. I'd go hang out with my friends	1	2	3	4	5
5. I'd pretend that it never happened	1	2	3	4	5
6. I'd just stay away from my classmate	1	2	3	4	5
7. I wouldn't do anything	1	2	3	4	5
8. I'd talk to my friends about it	1	2	3	4	5
9. I'd ask my parents what they thought	1	2	3	4	5
10. I'd try to work it out with the classmate	1	2	3	4	5
11. I'd go watch television	1	2	3	4	5
12. I'd get back at my classmate somehow	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D (cont.)

	Never		Sometimes		Always
13. I'd read a book	1	2	3	4	5
14. I'd cry	1	2	3	4	5
15. I'd think that it was no big deal	1	2	3	4	5
16. I'd say that it was my classmates fault	1	2	3	4	5
17. I'd talk to the teacher	1	2	3	4	5
18. I'd say that it was all my fault	1	2	3	4	5
19. I'd just make a joke out of the whole thing	1	2	3	4	5
20. I'd want to hurt myself	1	2	3	4	5
21. I'd wonder why it happened	1	2	3	4	5
22. I'd think that these things always happen to me	1	2	3	4	5
23. I'd think that I was just having a bad day	1	2	3	4	5
24. I'd tell myself that it would be okay	1	2	3	4	5
25. I'd compromise (try and work something out)	1	2	3	4	5
26. I'd think that I had done something wrong	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E

Hassles With Parents

Imagine the following situation:

You always do your chores at home (like cleaning your room) but not exactly when your parents want them done. You think that as long as the chores get done it's no big deal but your parents always want them done right away. You have a lot of arguments with your parents about this topic. On Friday, you still haven't finished your chores, you argue with your parents, they get fed up and ground you for the weekend.

Answer the following questions with regards to the situation above, by circling the number that best describes how you feel.

1) Has this situation happened to you in the past?

Never		Sometimes		Always
1	2	3	4	5

2) Imagine the same situation happened to you, how would it make you feel?

Upset		Neutral		Happy
1	2	3	4	5

3) Imagine the same situation happened to you, how stressful would it be for you?

Not at all Stressful		Somewhat Stressful		Very Stressful
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E (cont.)

4) A **loss** is a situation in which something bad has already occurred. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a loss?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

ii) A **threat** is a situation that could have bad or undesirable consequences for you. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a threat?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

iii) A **challenge** is a situation that could have good or desirable consequences for you. With regards to the situation above, do you view this situation as a challenge?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very
1	2	3	4	5

5) How much do you feel you could do something about the problem (e.g, to **change** things)?

Couldn't do Anything		Something		I could do A lot about it
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E (cont.)

Coping Questionnaire
(Hassles with Parents)

There are lots of different ways a person can deal with this parent hassle. We've listed some of them below. We call them coping strategies. Read through each of the coping strategies listed below, and think of each one as a possible way to solve this problem. After each strategy there is a scale that goes from 1 to 5.

- "1" means you'd **never** use this strategy
- "2" means that you would use this strategy **rarely**
- "3" means that **sometimes** you would use this strategy
- "4" means that you'd **often** use this strategy
- "5" means that you'd almost **always** use this strategy

Circle the number on the scale that best describes how much you'd use each strategy to deal with this parent hassle.

	Never		Sometimes		Always
1. I'd try to solve the problem myself	1	2	3	4	5
2. I'd get mad at my parents	1	2	3	4	5
3. I'd try not to think about it	1	2	3	4	5
4. I'd go hang out with friends	1	2	3	4	5
5. I'd pretend that it never happened	1	2	3	4	5
6. I'd just stay away from my parents	1	2	3	4	5
7. I wouldn't do anything	1	2	3	4	5
8. I'd go talk to my friends about it	1	2	3	4	5
9. I'd try to work it out with my parents	1	2	3	4	5
10. I'd go watch television	1	2	3	4	5
11. I'd get back at my parents somehow	1	2	3	4	5
12. I'd read a book	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E (cont.)

	Never		Sometimes		Always
13. I'd cry	1	2	3	4	5
14. I'd think that it was no big deal	1	2	3	4	5
15. I'd say that it was my parent's fault	1	2	3	4	5
16. I'd talk to a teacher	1	2	3	4	5
17. I'd say that it was all my fault	1	2	3	4	5
18. I'd just make a joke out of the whole thing	1	2	3	4	5
19. I'd want to hurt myself	1	2	3	4	5
20. I'd wonder why it happened	1	2	3	4	5
21. I'd think that these things always happen to me	1	2	3	4	5
22. I'd think that I was just having a bad day	1	2	3	4	5
23. I'd tell myself that it would be okay	1	2	3	4	5
24. I'd compromise (try and work something out)	1	2	3	4	5
25. I'd think that I had done something wrong	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix F

The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain. Please give your answers on the basis of how things have been for you over the last six months.

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings	☐	☐	☐
I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	☐	☐	☐
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	☐	☐	☐
I usually share with others, for example CD's, games, food	☐	☐	☐
I get very angry and often lose my temper	☐	☐	☐
I would rather be alone than with people of my age	☐	☐	☐
I usually do as I am told	☐	☐	☐
I worry a lot	☐	☐	☐
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	☐	☐	☐
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	☐	☐	☐
I have one good friend or more	☐	☐	☐
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want	☐	☐	☐
I am often unhappy, depressed or tearful	☐	☐	☐
Other people my age generally like me	☐	☐	☐
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	☐	☐	☐
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence	☐	☐	☐
I am kind to younger children	☐	☐	☐
I am often accused of lying or cheating	☐	☐	☐
Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	☐	☐	☐
I often offer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	☐	☐	☐
I think before I do things	☐	☐	☐
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	☐	☐	☐
I get along better with adults than with people my own age	☐	☐	☐
I have many fears, I am easily scared	☐	☐	☐
I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good	☐	☐	☐