

The Resilience, Adaptation and Well-Being Project



Family Coping Inventory

FCI

FCI:

Family Coping Inventory

Overview

The Family Coping Inventory (FCI) was developed by Hamilton McCubbin, Pauline Boss, Lance Wilson, and Barbara Dahl (1981) to assess how spouses appraise their overall responses to a family separation which is permanent (e.g., divorce), for an extended period (e.g., military assignments), or recurs repeatedly (e.g., corporate executive).

Development of FCI

The development of FCI was influenced by a hierarchical approach to the organization of the behavior. In the application of this approach, three levels of coping are defined: (a) coping behaviors (operationally defined through specific items on the FCI); (b) coping patterns (combinations of coping behaviors into scales which are factorially homogeneous); and (c) coping strategies (the combination of patterns used by a family unit or which characterize how the family generally responds to stressful or crisis situations). The theoretical basis for the generation of items was drawn from social support theory, family stress theory and psychological coping theory.

Social support theory (Caplan, 1976; Cobb, 1976) emphasizes the family's use of emotional, esteem and network support in the community. Items such as building close relationships with people or participating on a regular basis in planned activities conducted by others in my situation reflect social support theory.

The Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation (M.A. McCubbin & H.I. McCubbin, 1993) emphasizes the interaction between the definition the family makes of the situation and the resources they use to manage the internal and external strains and hardships resulting from the stressor event. Items which reflect family stress theory, for example, are believing that my life would not be any better if my spouse were here and trying to maintain family stability.

Psychological coping theory emphasizes the passive and active behaviors individuals use to deal with the anxieties and tensions emerging from stressor events and changes. For example, reading and keeping myself in shape and well-groomed are personal coping behaviors. The respondent reports how helpful each coping behavior or item has been to him, her, or the family unit in managing a separation by rating it *not helpful*, *minimally helpful*, *moderately helpful*, or *very helpful*.

Conceptual Organization

FCI is a 70-item self-report instrument which attempts to measure the coping dimension of the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation. Respondents are asked to evaluate how helpful specific behaviors have been to them in adjusting to the demands of individual members, the family system and the community which they experienced during a separation, and in making an overall family adaptation to this situation.

Reliability

FCI has been used in three different separation studies to establish reliabilities and validities: (a) with intact families to assess wives' coping strategies when their corporate executive husbands were repeatedly gone on routine business trips of short duration (Boss, H.I. McCubbin, & Lester, 1979); (b) with intact families in the military where the husband/father was separated from his family due to a long-term military assignment (H.I. McCubbin, Boss, Wilson, & Lester, 1980); and (c) with divorced persons coping with separation and single-parent status (Moore, 1980).

Factor analytic procedures were used in each of these studies to determine underlying coping patterns or scales. The SPSS principal factoring with iterations method was used. Initial estimates of the commonalities were given by the squared multiple correlations between a given variable and the remaining variables in the matrix. The Scree test (Cattell, 1966) was applied to the resulting eigenvalues to determine the final number of factors. The factors were rotated to a final solution using the varimax

criterion (Kaiser, 1958). Analysis of the data from each of these studies resulted in three different sets of scales which are reported here separately.

Validity

For recurrent short-term separations the sample consisted of 66 wives of corporate executives who were absent from home an average of nine days per month (range 1-24 days). Nine coping behaviors from FCI which were used most frequently by the wives whose husbands were most frequently required to be away from home were factor analyzed (Boss, H.I. McCubbin, & Lester, 1979). The following three scales emerged:

- I. **Fitting into the Corporate Lifestyle.** Three behaviors which reflect the wife's acceptance and participation in the corporate lifestyle. Items: 36, 42, 65.
- II. **Developing Self and Interpersonal Relationships.** Three behaviors which emphasize the wife's focus on her personal growth needs. Items: 4, 32, 45.
- III. **Establishing Independence and Self-Sufficiency.** Behaviors which reflect other than the togetherness model frequently espoused as the ideal for intact families. Items: 37, 39, 62.

For the *prolonged military separation* study, the subjects were 82 wives of Navy personnel deployed to sea for nine months. The subjects' responses to the 84 items on the coping inventory they completed were examined for applicability to their situation, clarity, variance and duplication (R.I. McCubbin, Dahl, et al., 1976). This resulted in a set of 30 items which were entered into a factor analysis. Five scales (coping patterns) emerged:

- I. **Maintaining Family Integrity.** Five behaviors which center around doing things together as a family, especially with the children. Items: 6, 8, 12, 13, 41 (Cronbach's alpha= .84).
- II. **Developing Interpersonal Relationships and Social Support.** Five items which focus upon the wife's efforts to develop meaningful and supportive relationships outside the family unit. Items: 20, 32, 45, 54, 70 (Cronbach's alpha= .82).
- III. **Managing Psychological Tension and Strain.** Six items which describe behaviors for reducing perceived stress and tension resulting from the separation. Items: 18, 28, 29, 35, 57, 63 (Cronbach's alpha= .74).
- IV. **Believing in the Value of the Spouse's Profession & Maintaining an Optimistic Definition of the Situation.** Six behaviors which emphasize a psychological resignation to and acceptance of the stressful situation. Items: 16, 30, 43, 46, 56, 61 (Cronbach's alpha= .85).
- V. **Developing Self-Reliance and Self-Esteem.** Four items which center around active self-development and growth behaviors. Items: 3, 4, 14, 33 (Cronbach's alpha= .71).

The study of *separation as a result of divorce* involved a sample of 293 legally divorced men and women from 12 states (234 women and 59 men) who volunteered for the study in response to newspaper ads (Moore, 1980). Fifty-two behavior items were factor analyzed resulting in five coping patterns.

- I. **Developing Self, Self-Esteem and Establishing Independence.** Eighteen coping behaviors which emphasize personal growth and development regarding skills, appearance and relationships, as well as a future orientation around an independent lifestyle. Items: 2, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 20, 23, 31, 33, 37, 38, 46, 54, 56, 64, 67, 68 (Cronbach's alpha= .86).

- II. **Involvement in Tension Releasing Social and Routine Activities and Contacts with Relatives.** Thirteen behaviors which emphasize activities done alone, with friends or with relatives which provide a diversion from the hardships and strains of a separation. Items: 27, 45, 47, 48, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 63, 66 (Cronbach's alpha= .82).
- III. **Investing in Children and Maintaining Family Stability.** Five behaviors centered around doing things as a family to maintain cohesion. Items: 6, 8, 12, 13, 41 (Cronbach's alpha= .85).
- IV. **Maintaining Social Support Through Religious & Social Activities.** Eight items which emphasize community and religious involvement. Items: 7, 17, 22, 26, 36, 43, 44, 60 (Cronbach's alpha= .81).
- V. **Expressing Feelings and Seeking Understanding Through Personal and Professional Relationships.** Eight coping behaviors which emphasize the release of feelings and efforts to be understood through friendships or from professionals. Items: 1, 9, 19, 21, 29, 32, 52, 70 (Cronbach's alpha= .71).

Form B of FCI has 70 items which include all of the items on these three sets of scales with the addition of five social desirability items and two more passive negative coping behaviors (drinking alcohol and using drugs).

Test-Retest Reliability

No additional studies to report at this time.

Additional Validity Checks

While several studies have used the FCI, we will only report on one investigation. This study looked at the relationship between coping strategies and the gender role orientation of wives as mitigators of distress (Patterson & H.I. McCubbin, 1980).

The subjects for this study were 82 wives of military husbands who were on an eight-month assignment-the sample reported above for the prolonged military separation. It was hypothesized that wives with higher scores on all five coping patterns (see coping scales for prolonged military separation) would experience less distress (as measured by increased drug and alcohol use during separation).

When distressed and non-distressed wives faced with separation were compared, the non-distressed wives emphasized the coping strategy of (a) accepting of lifestyle and optimism, (b) developing self-reliance and self-esteem, and (c) used an overall balanced coping strategy (Table 20.1).

Table 20.1
Comparison of Distressed It Non-Distressed Wives Coping with Family Separation

Coping Patterns	Distressed Wives Mean	Non-Distressed Wives Mean	\bar{D}	SD	t¹	p
Maintaining Family Integrity	14.2	15.3	-0.107	3.04	-1.32	NS
Developing Interpersonal Relationships & Social support	11.7	13.2	-1.50	4.16	-1.35	NS
Managing Psychological Tension & Strain	9.8	11.5	-0.143	4.07	-1.31	NS
Acceptance of Lifestyle & Optimism	17.5	19.0	-1.50	2.79	-2.01	.05
Developing Self Reliance & Self Esteem	7.8	9.7	-1.53	2.34	-2.26	.025
Balanced Coping Strategy ²	3	4.5	-1.50	1.22	-4.58	.0005

¹ Paired t test of differences between distressed and non-distressed wives

² Balanced coping strategy score was obtained by summing the number of coping patterns on which subject scored above the mean.

In addition, it was hypothesized that scores on each coping pattern would be positively associated with an androgynous gender role orientation; that is, perceiving oneself as possessing a high degree of both masculine and feminine attributes, thereby increasing one's behavioral repertoire and flexibility to the demands of a situation (Table 20.2).

Table 20.2
Correlations Between an Androgynous Gender Role Orientation and Coping in the Management of Family Separation (N=82)

Coping Patterns	Androgynous Gender Role Orientation	
	r	p\leq
Maintaining Family Integrity	+.26	.025
Developing Interpersonal Relationships & Social support	+.23	.05
Managing Psychological Tension & Strain	+.18	.05
Acceptance of Lifestyle & Optimism	+.28	.01
Developing Self Reliance & Self Esteem	+.16	NS
Balanced Coping Strategy ²	+.26	.025

Scoring Procedures

There are three different procedures for scoring FCI depending on the type of family separation-Recurrent Short Term, Long Term, or Divorce.

First choose the type of separation, then identify which items in the questionnaire belong to each of the subscales. The following lists will help you. Then sum the numbers circled by the respondent (0, 1, 2, 3) for each of the items in a subscale, and this will give you the score for that subscale. To obtain a total score, add the totals for each of the sub scales together for the type of separation measured.

Recurrent Short Term Separation

Subscale 1:	Fitting into Corporation Lifestyle:	36, 42, 65
Subscale 2:	Developing Self & Interpersonal Relationships:	4, 32, 45
Subscale 3:	Establishing Independence & Self Sufficiency:	37, 39, 62

Long Term Separation

Subscale 1:	Maintaining Family Integrity	6, 8, 12, 13, 41
Subscale 2:	Developing Interpersonal Relationships & Social Support:	20, 32, 45, 54, 70
Subscale 3:	Managing Psychological Tension & Strains	18, 28, 29, 35, 57, 63
Subscale 4:	Believing in the Value of the Spouse's Profession & Maintaining an Optimistic Definition of the Situation:	16, 30, 43, 46, 56, 61
Subscale 5:	Developing Self Reliance & Self Esteem:	3, 4, 14, 33

Separation Due to Divorce

Subscale 1:	Developing Self, Self-Esteem & Establishing Independence:	2, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 20, 23, 31, 33, 37, 38, 46, 54, 56, 64, 67, 68
Subscale 2:	Involvement in Tension Releasing Social & Routine Activities & Contacts with Relatives:	27, 45, 47, 48, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 63, 66
Subscale 3:	Investing in Children & Maintaining Family Stability:	6, 8, 12, 13, 41
Subscale 4:	Maintaining Social Support Through Religious & Social Activities:	7, 17, 22, 26, 36, 43, 44, 60
Subscale 5:	Expressing Feelings & Seeking Understanding Through Personal & Professional Relationships:	1, 9, 19, 21, 29, 32, 52, 70

Norms and/or Comparative Data

Comparative data is presented in Table 20.1.

Instrument Utilization for Research

The FCI instrument is currently being tested within the Family Stress, Coping and Health Project and by other investigators. The few studies that have included this instrument have already been cited in the validity section of this chapter and are included in the references. Therefore, a summary table of related publications is not available at this time.

Notes

1. The earlier writings on this instrument included a comprehensive description of the instrument's development. For the sake of brevity we limited the chapter to the basic information that users have requested and needed. If you desire a copy and are unable to find our earlier publications, either the 1987 or the 1991 edition, please write to us at the Center for Excellence in Family Studies, Family Stress, Coping and Health Project, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1300 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 63706 or send email to manual@macc.wisc.edu. There will be a charge for these additional materials.
2. When referencing this instrument, the proper citation is: McCubbin, H.I., Boss, P., Wilson, L., & Dahl, B. (1981). Family Coping Inventory (FCI). In H.I. McCubbin, A.I. Thompson, & M.A. McCubbin (1996). Family assessment: Resiliency, coping and adaptation-Inventories for research and practice. (pp.626637). Madison: University of Wisconsin System.

FCI

FAMILY COPING INVENTORY

English Version



FCI

FAMILY COPING INVENTORY[©]

Hamilton I. McCubbin Pauline G. Boss Lance R. Wilson Barbara B. Dahl

Purpose

FCI is designed to record the behaviors wives or husbands find helpful to them in managing family life when spouses are separated for short, long, or permanent periods of time. Coping is defined as Individual or group behavior used to manage the hardships and relieve the discomfort associated with life changes or difficult life events.

Directions


- On the next two pages is a list of “behaviors” or statements that spouses may or may not use to cope with a separation experiences. Please carefully consider “how helpful” each of these behaviors has been to you in your adjustment to separation.
- Circle one of the following responses for each statement:
 - 0 – Not Helpful
 - 1 – Minimally Helpful
 - 2 – Moderately Helpful
 - 3 – Very Helpful
- Please be sure and record a response for every item.

Coping behaviors

	Not Helpful	Minimally Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Very Helpful
1. Talking with other individuals in my same situation	0	1	2	3
2. Going to school	0	1	2	3
3. Learning new skills	0	1	2	3
4. Developing myself as a person	0	1	2	3
5. Making financial investments/savings	0	1	2	3
6. Doing things with the family	0	1	2	3
7. Involvement in religious activities	0	1	2	3
8. Trying to be a father and a mother to the child	0	1	2	3
9. Allowing myself to become angry	0	1	2	3



<i>Coping behaviors</i>	Not Helpful	Minimally Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Very Helpful
10. Believing that my husband's career is most important	0	1	2	3
11. Always depending upon friends to give me support	0	1	2	3
12. Trying to maintain family stability	0	1	2	3
13. Investing myself in my children	0	1	2	3
14. Becoming more independent	0	1	2	3
15. Reading	0	1	2	3
16. Believing that the institution that my spouse and I work for have my family's best interest in mind	0	1	2	3
17. Taking advantage of local programs and services aimed at helping those in my situation	0	1	2	3
18. Wishing my spouse (or former spouse) was not gone and that things were different	0	1	2	3
19. Believing that my life would not be any better if my spouse were here (or my former spouse and I were still together)	0	1	2	3
20. Building close relationships with people	0	1	2	3
21. Taking advantage of professional counseling	0	1	2	3
22. Involvement in activities specifically for someone in my situation	0	1	2	3
23. Establishing a new life for myself	0	1	2	3
24. Drinking alcohol	0	1	2	3
25. Always counting on relatives to help me out	0	1	2	3
26. Being active in the local community	0	1	2	3
27. Doing things with relatives	0	1	2	3
28. Reliving the past; reflecting on the memorable events	0	1	2	3
29. Crying	0	1	2	3
30. Believing that things will always work out	0	1	2	3
31. Dating	0	1	2	3
32. Talking to someone about how I feel	0	1	2	3

Please continue on other side 

<i>Coping behaviors</i>	Not Helpful	Minimally Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Very Helpful
33. Showing that I'm strong	0	1	2	3
34. Using drugs	0	1	2	3
35. Making sure I take advantage of all the state and local economic benefits I have coming	0	1	2	3
36. Participating on a regular basis in planned activities conducted by others in my situation	0	1	2	3
37. Establishing a routine which is not dependent upon my spouse (or former spouse) being around	0	1	2	3
38. Believing that I am better at running the family and /or finances without my spouse or former spouse	0	1	2	3
39. Believing that this is our style of life and I should enjoy it	0	1	2	3
40. Always trusting my faith to pull me through	0	1	2	3
41. Doing more things with the children	0	1	2	3
42. Being a "good" wife and doing what my husband wants me to do	0	1	2	3
43. Believing in God	0	1	2	3
44. Doing volunteer work	0	1	2	3
45. Involvement in social activities (parties, etc.)	0	1	2	3
46. Planning my future	0	1	2	3
47. Concentrating on hobbies (art, music, sewing, etc.)	0	1	2	3
48. Eating	0	1	2	3
49. Traveling	0	1	2	3
50. Always relying on myself to solve problems	0	1	2	3
51. Going shopping with the children or by myself	0	1	2	3
52. Reading about how other persons in my situation handle things	0	1	2	3
53. Seeking encouragement, guidance and support from my parent(s)	0	1	2	3
54. Engaging in relationships and friendships which are satisfying to me	0	1	2	3

Please continue on other side 

<i>Coping behaviors</i>	Not Helpful	Minimally Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Very Helpful
55. Sleeping	0	1	2	3
56. Keeping myself in shape and well-groomed	0	1	2	3
57. Watching television	0	1	2	3
58. Going to the movies	0	1	2	3
59. Remodeling or redecorating the house	0	1	2	3
60. Engaging in club work (church, PTA, etc.)	0	1	2	3
61. Telling myself that I have many things I should be thankful for	0	1	2	3
62. Keeping problems to myself	0	1	2	3
63. Going shopping with friends	0	1	2	3
64. Advancing my professional career	0	1	2	3
65. Living up to what society wants me to do as a parent	0	1	2	3
66. Participating in gatherings and events with relatives	0	1	2	3
67. Socializing with friends of the opposite sex	0	1	2	3
68. Establish a new style of life—new friends, new activities, etc.	0	1	2	3
69. Always believing that nothing bad could ever happen to my children	0	1	2	3
70. Seeking out friends who understand how difficult it is for me at times	0	1	2	3