



# The Role of Stress in the Family: The Bidirectional Relation between Family Functioning and Life Stressors

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## Introduction

Purpose:

Stressful events that occur outside of the home can often influence interactions that occur within the family. The spillover hypothesis helps to explain this and pinpoints potential causes of distress in parent/offspring relationships (Staines, 1980). The purpose of this study is to identify the extent to which familial stress in the home environment is influenced by extrafamilial experiences, as well as how these experiences directly affect the parent/offspring relationship.

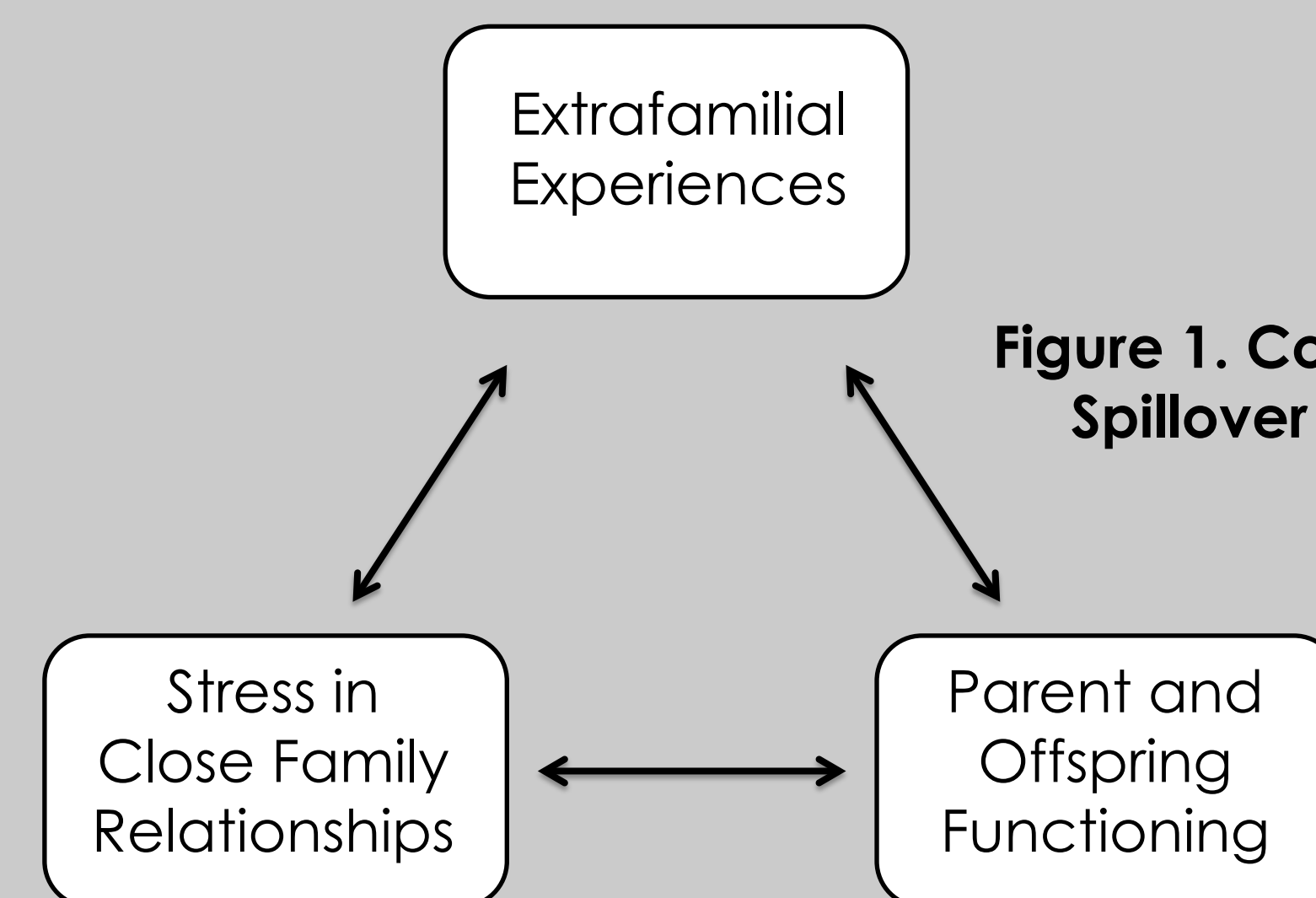


Figure 1. Conceptual Spillover Model

## Methods

Participants:

- Participants for this study are parent/adolescent dyads that participate in the assessments together. The adolescent must be between the ages of 14 and 15 years old.
- Participants are recruited by flyer, phone, or in-person through the University of Maryland's Comprehensive Assessment and Intervention Program (CAIP) Lab.

The dyads are randomly assigned to complete either a high or low stress task once they arrive to the study.

## Methods Cont'd.

Procedure:

Interviews related to everyday stressors:

- To(may)to-To(mah)to Interview (De Los Reyes & Suarez, 2009)

Observational assessments of family conflict:

- Discussion Task

Performance-based assessments:

- Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test 2
- Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test
- Balloon Analogue Risk Task
- Behavioral Indicator of Resiliency to Distress
- Spatial Working Memory

Physiological Measures:

- Heart rate
- Height
- Weight
- EEG

The assessments and observed behaviors will then be coded.

## Discussion

This study is currently in the concept development and preparation stage. A major research goal for the summer was to train the research team on the proper administration of the assessments and clinical protocols for how to interact with participants. Without this important step, further development of the proposed study to be conducted in the fall would not be possible.

- Summer 2016- Training of undergraduate research assistants on how to administer the various assessments to participants

Future Development of Project:

- Fall 2016- Recruitment of families to participate in the study
- September 2016- Assessments will begin

The results of this study will help to explain the role of positive and negative life experiences on the functioning of families, which are key to exploring stress and its relation to everyday life and psychopathology. The findings will also provide insight on the effectiveness of family and stress-related intervention programs.

## Broader Impacts

This study is in collaboration with Dr. Glasper's Behavioral Neuroendocrinology Lab, which studies the effect of stress on the neurons and brain of the bi-parental California Mouse. This multidisciplinary approach leads to a better understanding of the physiological implications of stress which, in conjunction with the human study, will help explain the impact of stress on both physical and mental health while promoting synergy between multiple research labs.

## References

De Los Reyes A, Suarez L. Manual for the To(may)to-To(mah)to Interview-youth and caregiver versions. Unpublished manuals. University of Maryland at College Park; 2009.

Staines, G. L. (1980). Spillover versus compensation: a review of the literature on the relationship between work and nonwork. *Human Relations*, 33(2), 111-129. doi: 10.1177/001872678003300203

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