Since the 1980s, a promising reorientation in stress theory and research has occurred. In contrast to the body of knowledge focusing on major life events and their effect on individuals’ physical and psychological well-being, a new body of knowledge has emerged, emphasizing the consequences of daily occurrences on people’s psychological well-being and family relationships (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988; Dumont, Tarabulsy, Gagnon, Tessier, & Provost, 1998; Kanner, Feldman, Weinberger, & Ford, 1987; Williams, Zyzanski, & Wright, 1992; Wolf, Elson, & Kissling, 1989). Empirical evidence from a number of studies shows that “daily hassles” may have a similar or even stronger effect on people’s physical and psychological health than that of major life events (Cassidy, 2000; DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1982; Hahn & Smith, 1999; Johnson & Sherman, 1997; van Eck, Nicolson, & Berkhofer, 1998). Increasingly, the study of daily hassles and their effect on people’s welfare has attracted scholarly attention in various disciplines (e.g., Fontana & McLaughlin, 1998; Gunthert, Cohen, & Armeli, 1999; Harper, Schualje, & Sandberg, 2000; Porter, Gil, Carson, Anthony, & Ready, 2000). However, the significance of various daily occurrences in one’s life and the relations among hassles may differ in different cultures.

The present research focuses on cultural variations in the experience of daily stresses and strains. More specifically, we simultaneously examine the experiences of daily hassles among people holding different cultural orientations (individualistic vs. collectivist) and among people belonging to different socioethnic groups (Jews and Arabs). Additionally, we present a conceptual model of the internal structure of daily hassle domains and examine the relations among clusters of daily hassles in these cultural groups.

Culture and the Experience of Daily Hassles

Culture may play an important role in every component of the stress process, including the occurrence of events, the appraisal of events and coping options, the coping strategies used, and adaptational outcomes (Slavin, Rainer, McCreaey, & Gowda, 1991). The most prominent framework used to examine cultural variations of stress and emotion is based on Hofstede’s (1980) and Triandis’s (1995a) distinction between individualistic and collectivist cultures. In individualistic cultures, often associated with Western, industrialized, modern societies, there is a strong, commonly shared belief in the independence of self from others. The self is made meaningful primarily through a set of internal attributes, such as goals, desires, abilities, talents, and personality traits, and the highest priority is accorded to actualizing individual orientations.
potential and fulfilling one’s roles. As such, individualistic cultures tend to view behavior as a function of these personal attributes and to emphasize values that promote individual goals (Kitayama, Markus, & Lieberman, 1995).

In contrast, collectivist cultures, often associated with non-Western societies, do not value such separation and independence of the self but rather believe in the fundamental connection or interdependence among those within an in-group. In these cultures, the self is made meaningful through the relationships of which the self is a part. The major task for members of collectivist cultures is to fit in with and adjust to the relationships of their in-group while constraining their own personal desires. Thus, collectivist cultures view situational factors, such as norms, roles, and obligations, as the major determinants of behavior and emphasize values that promote the welfare of their in-group (Hofstede, 1980; Kitayama et al., 1995; Smith & Bond, 1993; Triandis, 1995a, 1995b).

The literature on cross-cultural research in stress deals both with content (the specific topic under study) and with method (different relationships of cross-cultural comparison). As far as content, a large variety of sources of stress have been investigated cross-culturally. These include trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder, and response to natural disasters (e.g., de Silva, 1999; Norris, Perilla, Ibanez, & Murphy, 2001; Stamm & Friedman, 2000; Terheggen, Stroebe, & Kleber, 2001); job, occupational, or managerial stress (e.g., Jamal, 1999; Miller et al., 2000); and role conflict and role overload (Peterson et al., 1995), among others.

As for method, cross-cultural similarities and differences have been examined in a variety of ways. Most often, researchers have compared two countries, presumed to be representatives of different cultural orientations (e.g., individualistic vs. collectivist, Western vs. Eastern), in terms of stressor events, appraisal of events, ways of coping, or level of distress (Laungani, 2001; Lu, Kao, Cooper, & Spector, 2000; Orford et al., 2001; Watanabe, Shiel, McLellan, Kurihara, & Hayashi, 2001). In a number of studies, multiple countries were compared in terms of characteristic responses to stress (e.g., Miller et al., 2000; Peterson et al., 1995).

Other studies compared stress and coping between two countries with presumably similar cultural orientations—for example, China, Japan, and Korea (Kim, Won, Liu, Liu, & Kitanishi, 1997) or England and Germany (Kirkcaldy & Cooper, 1993).

Cultural differences and similarities between two or more subcultures within a single nation have rarely been the subject of investigation (Sistler & Moore, 1996).

A review of cross-cultural research reveals that the concept of culture is often confused by related concepts, such as ethnicity, race, nation, and country. Researchers often conduct cross-cultural studies by comparing people of different countries, thus using the terms country and culture interchangeably (Matsumoto, Takeuchi, Andayani, Kouznetsova, & Krupp, 1998). In a similar fashion, ethnic or racial differences are oftentimes presented as cultural differences, though they are not necessarily so (Slavin et al., 1991).

There are two fundamental problems with operationalizing culture in terms of country or ethnic group. First, it creates an ecological fallacy (Babbie, 1989), that is, it makes assertions about one type of unit of analysis (i.e., culture) on the basis of the examination of another (i.e., country, ethnic group). Second, when one equates culture with nation, such a conception assumes a homogeneity of cultural orientations within countries. Indeed, it is more than likely that cultural diversity exists within countries as it does between countries (Lavee & Katz, 2003).

Another limitation in cross-cultural research is that different “cultures” are lumped together, as if they represent a uniform set of thoughts, beliefs, practices, and behaviors and as if they have a shared history and religion (Slavin et al., 1991). Although many scholars equate non-Western societies with “collectivism,” not all collectivist cultures experience and express emotions in a similar fashion. For example, the Japanese and the Indians, both of whom are commonly characterized as collectivists, differ in their expression of feelings. Whereas Japanese hide conflicts and promote the expression of positive affect in the service of maintaining interpersonal relationships (Matsumoto, 1990), Indians express both positive and negative emotions (Laungani, 1995).

Cultural Orientation and Ethnic Affiliation in Israeli Society

The present study attempts to address these limitations by exploring cultural variations in the experience of daily hassles within one country. In cross-national studies, Israel is most frequently characterized as a homogeneous society in terms of cultural orientation (e.g., Scherer, 1997). However, this view overlooks cultural differences within Israeli society. In fact, the Israeli population is composed of two main groups: Jews, who make up the majority (77.8%), and Arabs (18.9%). The rest are neither Jews nor
Arabs—primarily non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2000).

Although the Arab population in Israel is divided among several religious groups (Moslems, Christians, Druze, and others), they all share a similar historical background, speak the same language, and hold similar cultural norms and values (Smooha, 1993). The Jewish population in Israel is often described as being modern, similar in many ways to “individualistic” Western societies, whereas the Israeli Arab population is typically considered to be a relatively traditional, “collectivist” cultural group (Florian, Mikulincer, & Weller, 1993; Haj-Yahia, 1997; Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2002). Yet even such a characterization of socioethnic groups in itself overgeneralizes cultural orientation, as suggested by the substantial number of Arabs with an individualistic orientation and the number of Jews with a collectivist orientation (Lavee & Katz, 2002, 2003).

In our previous work, we found significant differences between Jews and Arabs in their experiences and perceptions of daily stress (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2003). However, collectivists and individualists were more similar than different in their sources of daily hassles (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2002). The first purpose of the present study is to examine the joint contribution of ethnic affiliation and cultural orientation to variation in the experience of daily hassles. The second purpose of this study is to examine the relations among hassle domains in different cultural and ethnic groups.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Daily hassles may be experienced across various dimensions of one’s daily life (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989; DeLongis et al., 1982). Most typically, daily hassles are related to such life domains as family (e.g., relations with children, spouse, other relatives), roles (e.g., work, school, household responsibilities), the social environment (noise, dwelling, transportation), financial strains, and issues related to self and self-fulfillment (e.g., appearance, time for self, actualization of personal goals).

We propose that daily hassles may be conceptualized as a configuration of concentric circles, starting with self-related hassles in the innermost circle, family hassles in the middle, and social–environmental hassles in the outermost circle. Role-related hassles are conceived to be crossing these circles, as one’s roles may be related to the self, to the family, and to the social environment, contingent on the relative centrality of each of the three in a specific cultural group. In other words, the internal relations among hassle domains, which define the structure of the construct, are culturally determined.

We hypothesize that the defining characteristic of individualistic groups, that is, the centrality of self, will be manifested by a close tie between the experience of self and role-related hassles, as distinguished from family and social–environmental hassles. At the same time, the defining characteristic of collectivist groups, that is, the centrality of the social group in one’s identity, will be manifested by a close tie between family, social, and role-related hassles, all of which will be distinguished from self-related hassles. Given the assumption that financial strains are generally related to the family as a whole rather than to individual family members, we expect financial hassles to be associated with family-related hassles in all cultural groups.

Method

Data collection for this study was carried out during the period of January–March, 2001. During this period, life in Israel was influenced by three major political events: The beginning of the Palestinian uprising (intifada) in October 2000; an intensification of tension between Israeli Arabs and Jews, which resulted in the death of 13 Arab youngsters; and the fall of the government, followed by national elections (which eventually led to a new government).

Participants

Two samples of 697 Jewish and 300 Arab respondents were drawn by means of a random telephone number dialing. The number of Arab respondents was somewhat inflated relative to their proportion of Israel’s population (19%) to enable appropriate statistical analyses. Forty-four percent of the total sample and of both Jewish and Arab subsamples were men, and the rest (56%) were women.

Preliminary analysis showed that, after elimination of respondents who were not clearly identified as individualistic or collectivist, 396 of the Jewish respondents (59.8%) were identified as individualistic and 266 (40.2%) were identified as collectivist. Among the Arab respondents, 214 (71.3%) were identified as collectivists and 86 (28.7%) were identified as individualists. Demographic characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1. As the data in the table indicate, both cultural orientations had a similar gender distribution, and the two groups did not differ in their mean age. However, collectivists were more likely to have been married for a longer period of time and to have more children. On average, respondents having an individualistic orientation had a higher educational level and a higher income level than did those having a collectivist orientation. In terms of religiosity level, the majority of the individualists defined themselves as secular, whereas the collectivist respondents more often reported that they were traditional or orthodox.
Table 1
Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Jews (n = 396)</th>
<th>Collectivists (n = 266)</th>
<th>Arabs (n = 86)</th>
<th>Collectivists (n = 214)</th>
<th>F (df)</th>
<th>χ² (df)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (M)</td>
<td>39.32</td>
<td>39.49</td>
<td>36.41</td>
<td>38.79</td>
<td>2.13 (3, 958)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>10.57</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>9.66</td>
<td>10.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital length (M)</td>
<td>14.53</td>
<td>15.60</td>
<td>11.73</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>3.34* (3, 956)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>10.60</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. children (M)</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>30.34* (3, 831)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.90 (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>186.80** (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income level (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>189.98** (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>942.48** (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moslem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of religiosity (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>126.62** (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 962.
*p < .05. **p < .01.

Procedure and Instruments

Data were collected by a telephone survey, with the use of a computerized assisted telephone interviewing system. Trained interviewers conducted the interviews in Hebrew and Arabic with Jewish and Arab respondents, respectively.

Daily stresses and strains were measured by an adapted version of the Daily Hassles and Uplifts Scale (DeLongis et al., 1982). The instrument consists of a list of 18 items (e.g., “children,” “parents,” “spouse,” “work,” “health,” and “time for self”) that can constitute sources of strain, stress, and hassle. Two other items—“social-political events” and “security-related events”—were also included to account for the current geopolitical situation in the Middle East. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not each item had been a source of stress for them during the past week.

Items were clustered into five domains of sources of stress: family (parents, children, spouse, in-laws, and other family relatives), self (appearance, time for self, and health), roles (work-related stress and household chores), social–environmental (housing, neighborhood, security, and sociopolitical situation), and financial stress.

Cultural orientation (collectivism–individualism) was measured by an adapted version of the Relational, Individual, and Collective Self-Aspect scale (Kashima & Hardie, 2000). Respondents were asked to choose between two alternatives for various items measuring values and activities in relation to personal well-being (individualism) versus group welfare (collectivism). For example, “The most satisfying activity for me is: (a) doing something for myself, or (b) doing something for my group.” On the basis of the responses to these items, respondents were categorized as having either a collectivist or an individualistic orientation.

Analyses and Results

The data were analyzed in two phases. First, two-factor (ethnicity and cultural orientation) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine group differences in the experience of daily
hassles. Second, a multidimensional scaling (MDS) technique was employed to explore the structure of relations among the five hassle domains.

**Group Differences in Daily Hassles**

In an attempt to examine ethnic and cultural differences in the evaluation of daily hassles, a multivariate analysis was conducted. Table 2 presents means and standard deviations of the five hassle domains, along with a test for ethnicity and culture effects. The data in Table 2 reveal effects of overall ethnicity and cultural orientation but no interaction effect. A closer inspection of the findings shows that Jews are significantly more distressed by family matters than are their Arab counterparts, $F(1, 958) = 21.78, p < .01$, and that people with an individualistic orientation report more self-related hassles than do those with a collectivist orientation. The data further show an interaction effect in the evaluation of family hassles, $F(1, 958) = 3.89, p < .05$, with Jewish collectivists reporting more family hassles than their individualistic counterparts, though no difference was found between Arab individualists and collectivists. No ethnic affiliation or cultural orientation differences were found in roles, social–environmental areas, or financial hassles.

**Relations Among Hassle Domains**

Further exploration of the data employed an MDS technique to provide a geometrical model that would represent any structure present within the daily hassle domains. Because the data were collected from four different groups (2 ethnic groups × 2 cultural orientations), a nonmetric MDS procedure was used to evaluate whether group differences existed. The dimensionality of the MDS solutions was assessed primarily through an examination of “stress values,” which can be considered a “badness-of-fit” index (Jones & Koehly, 1993). Initial examination of the data revealed that a two-dimensional solution was adequate for all groups. The stress values were .093, .041, .087, and .117 for data from individualistic Jews, collectivist Jews, individualistic Arabs, and collectivist Arabs, respectively, indicating that the models fit the data reasonably well for all groups. Additionally, scatter diagrams of distances plotted against dissimilarities confirmed that the assumption of a linear relationship for the data was justified for all groups.

The central motivating concept of the MDS is that the distances between the points should correspond to the proximities. If the proximities are supposed to be similarities, then strong similarities will correspond to small distances and relative dissimilarities to large distances. A Euclidean distance measure was used to obtain a two-dimensional solution, the configuration of which can be seen in Figure 1.

It can be seen from Figure 1 that in all four groups, financial strain is geometrically isolated from the four other hassle domains, indicating that it is relatively unrelated to the other sources of daily hassles. These

---

**Table 2**

Means, Standard Deviations, and Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Daily Hassles by Ethnic Affiliation and Cultural Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of hassle</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Arabs</th>
<th>$F(1, 958)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individualists</td>
<td>Collectivists</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social–environmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Model $F(5, 954)$: $E = 6.24**$, $O = 2.21*$, $E \times O = 0.85$. $E =$ Ethnicity; $O =$ Orientation.

*p < .05. **p < .01.
other sources of daily hassles are located along an internal–external dimension (self, family, and social–environmental hassles), together with role-related hassles. An examination of the four configurations suggests a continuum of cultural orientation, ranging from the most individualistic group (individualistic Jews) to the most collectivist group (collectivist Arabs), with the collectivist Jews and individualistic Arabs found in between. The proximity of role-related hassles to other sources of stress helps to characterize the specific nature of a group in relation to others. For individualistic Jews, the most typical individualistic group, role-related hassles are closely associated with self-related hassles. For both collectivist Jews and individualistic Arabs, role-related hassles are closely associated with family hassles. Finally, for collectivist Arabs, the most typical collectivist group, role-related hassles are closely tied together among collectivist Arabs may suggest that for this group there is no differentiation between self, family, and role-related hassles; that is, daily hassles associated with these three domains are lumped together.

**Discussion**

Previous research on cultural determinants of emotions (Kitayama et al., 1995; Matsumoto, 1990; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992) and of stress (Laungani, 1995, 2001; Slavin et al., 1991) has not differentiated between nation and culture. In our previous work in this area (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2002, 2003), we
examined people’s negative and positive daily experiences from two points of view: cultural and contextual. We explored cultural differences by comparing people having individualistic and collectivist orientations, and we examined contextual differences by comparing the evaluations of daily experiences between Jews and Arabs in Israel. These two sets of analyses, however, provided only a partial explanation insofar as they did not consider cultural and contextual explanations simultaneously.

The present article attempts to contribute to the literature on cultural variations in two ways. First, it addresses the inherent problem in many cross-cultural studies wherein culture is operationalized in terms of either country or ethnic group. By distinguishing between cultural orientation and ethnic group affiliation within a single country, the present article treats culture in a way that is more consistent with the concept. Second, we examine the construct of daily hassles as it pertains to the relations among its constituent parts within groups with different ethnic affiliations and cultural orientations.

Examining a phenomenon such as daily hassles in different cultures and ethnic groups requires researchers to adopt standards of cultural sensitivity (Padilla, 2001; Rogler, 1999). As Rogler has noted, cultural insensitivity may stem from uncritically transferring concepts across cultures, inadequate linguistic translation of standardized instruments, or from suppressing or deflecting cultural understandings. To address such demands, we took several measures: The research team comprised both Jewish and Arab researchers; the interviews were conducted in the respondents’ native languages, Hebrew or Arabic; we selected items with respect to cultural norms; and instruments were translated from English to Hebrew and Arabic by bilingual researchers (English–Hebrew and Hebrew–Arabic) to ensure that the content, meaning, and spirit of the items would be fully kept in both samples.

The findings indicate both cultural similarities and differences in the tendency to perceive certain life domains as sources of stress. As has been noted, cultural differences may stem from living and social conditions that are culture specific, or they may be shaped by variations in sensitivity to certain events and by culture-specific beliefs (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). The finding that individualists were more concerned with self-related hassles was not surprising, as it fits with the accumulated knowledge pertaining to the characteristics of an individualistic cultural orientation. Yet the finding that Jews, the majority of whom hold an individualistic cultural orientation, were more distressed with family-related hassles than their Arab counterparts was quite surprising and contrary to our initial expectation.

Two explanations may account for this finding. First, we must consider that although collectivists may be more concerned with family-related issues, they may be reluctant to define them as a source of hassles because sharing family difficulties with others is not within their accepted norms (Haj-Yahia, 1997). At the same time, this finding corroborates the observation that the family plays a central role in the lives of all people in Israel, Jews and Arabs alike, regardless of their cultural orientation (Lavee & Katz, 2002).

Analysis of the relations among various domains of daily hassles among the four groups, as defined by ethnicity and cultural orientation, generated a conceptual map that can be described in terms of a continuum ranging from the typical individualist (Jews with an individualistic orientation) to the typical collectivist (Arabs with a collectivist orientation), with collectivist Jews and individualistic Arabs in between. A central feature distinguishing among the four groups is the perception of hassles related to one’s roles, which appears to define the foci of one’s daily experience. The typical individualistic experience is most clearly represented by the association between roles and self. For people in this group, the materialization of a sense of self is rooted in the fulfillment of self-assigned roles and personal objectives that predominate over those of the group (Triandis, 1995a, 1995b). At the other end of the continuum, the typical collectivist experience is most clearly characterized by a close association of family, self, and roles. For people in this collectivist group, hassles from different sources are not experienced separately from each other. Instead, personal objectives are subordinated to those of the collective, and an adjustment is made between one’s personal objectives and those of the group (Smith & Bond, 1993; Triandis, 1995a).

In between the “typical” individualists and collectivists, collectivist Jews and individualistic Arabs are similarly characterized by the association of roles and family. For both groups, the traditional emphasis on the centrality of the family is reflected in the fact that one’s role strains are interconnected with one’s family-related hassles. Unlike for “pure” individualists, these hassles are not experienced as closely related to the self, and unlike for “pure” collectivists, they are not experienced as closely related to the surrounding social environment. These people may be said to be in a state of cultural transition between traditionalism and modernism (Lavee & Katz, 2002).
Jews holding a collectivist orientation are most commonly those who, either themselves or their ancestors, have emigrated from Arab countries in Asia (e.g., Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Syria) or North Africa (e.g., Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria). While being influenced by the mainstream Israeli Euro-American values and lifestyle, they have also retained the conservative values and norms that predominated in their culture of origin. In contrast, Arabs holding an individualistic orientation are most typically those who live in mixed Jewish–Arab urban settings (Lavee & Katz, 2002). Because of their geographical proximity to and continuous daily contacts with the Jewish majority, they are heavily exposed to a Western lifestyle and values. As has been noted elsewhere (Al-Haj, 1989; Haj-Yahia, 1995), these individuals tend to live in an atmosphere of opposing forces: modernization and change versus conservatism and traditionalism.

Although we highlight cultural differences in regard to the internal structure of relations among hassle domains and the tendency to experience certain sources of stress, it is equally as important to recognize cultural similarities. Research has repeatedly demonstrated the existence of both universal and cultural-specific experiences (Laungani, 1995; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Paez & Vergara, 1995; Russell, 1991; Scherer, 1997; Solomon, 1997). The present research shows that, by and large, certain daily occurrences are perceived as stressful in different cultures as well as in different ethnic groups. Jews and Arabs, individualists and collectivists alike share similar experiences of financial, social, and role-related hassles as sources of daily stress. Moreover, although certain differences are found between groups in the structure of relations among daily hassles, other commonalities are shared across ethnic groups and cultural orientations.

Most striking is that the overall structure of internal relations among hassle domains was found to contain more similarities than differences. In all four groups, four hassle domains (self, family, social–environmental, and roles) are arranged along one axis, whereas financial strain is spatially isolated, indicating that it is commonly perceived as a qualitatively different source of stress. In the same fashion, social–environmental hassles appear to be similarly configured in all ethnocultural groups. In the Israeli context, this domain may be shaped by the current political and security concerns shared by Jews and Arabs alike (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2003). Thus, although the groups may differ with respect to the relations among self, family, and role-related hassles, they are more similar with respect to both social–environmental and financial hassles. This may suggest that, at least in the Israeli context, these two sources of daily stress are perceived as a common denominator regardless of ethnic affiliation or cultural orientation.

The findings of this study provide further evidence for the significance of both universal and culture-specific experiences of stress. Although scholars tend to highlight cross-cultural differences, universal or cross-cultural similarities prove to be just as informative.

References


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