

## Dealing with Hectic Times: Strategies Used in the Business and in the Family

Nancy J. Miller, Iowa State University<sup>1</sup>

Margaret A. Fitzgerald, North Dakota State University<sup>2</sup>

Mary Winter, Iowa State University<sup>3</sup>

Jennifer Paul, Iowa State University<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to ascertain the adjustment strategies used by business managers and household managers in family businesses during "hectic times." Hectic times are defined as periods when increased and/or competing demands are made on time and/or human resources either in the family or the business. Adjustment strategies are a means of restoring or maintaining an acceptable level of well-being for the family or the business.

Data are from the 1997 National Family Business Study (see Winter, Fitzgerald, Heck, Haynes & Danes, 1998 for a description of the sampling and data collection procedures). In order to compare strategies used by business and household managers, only those households in which both the business manager and the household manager completed the interviews, or where one member performed the dual-role of household and business manager, were included in the sample used in this analysis (n=673).

The type and level of adjustment strategy used by household managers and business managers were assessed using a list of fourteen adjustment strategies, seven that addressed how household managers could deal with increased demands in the business, and seven parallel statements that addressed how business managers could deal with hectic times in the family. Respondents were asked to respond on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranking '1' for never and '5' for always.

Household managers rated three adjustment strategies on the 'sometimes' to 'always' side of the scale in terms of frequency of use during demanding business periods. Household managers reported that those family members working in the business were likely to bring business tasks home, put off or skip routine household tasks to do business work, and take family work that was normally done at home to complete while at the business. The mean scores for the business manager were, in general, lower than mean scores for the companion adjustment strategies used by the household manager. Business managers report that they 'sometimes' to 'seldom' do more business tasks at home; get less sleep; take care of family responsibilities at work more often; skip or defer routine business demands to spend more time with family; and temporarily shift some of the business work to others. Business managers would seldom to never hire temporary help for either the home or the business, or have family members, other relatives, or friends help with the business without pay. There were significant differences in the frequencies of strategies used in the same household between business and household managers, with household managers reporting greater adjustment to the business than vice versa. The present situation may determine the strategy used. Maintaining clear boundaries between the family and the business may be unrealistic given that work is brought from the business to the household and vice versa when times are hectic. In demanding times, adjustments may have to be made in the business and in the family to restore balance.

### References

Winter, M., Fitzgerald, M. A., Heck, R. Z. K., Haynes, G. W., & Danes, S. M. (1998). Revisiting the study of family businesses: Methodological challenges, dilemmas, and alternative approaches. *Family Business Review*, 11, (3), 239-252.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Textiles and Clothing, College of Family and Consumer Sciences.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Child Development and Family Science, College of Human Development and Education.

<sup>3</sup> Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education, College of Family and Consumer Sciences.

<sup>4</sup> Graduate Assistant, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Family and Consumer Sciences.