The experiences of daily life are examined both as sources of repeated or chronic stress and as the basis of coping repertoires. Major social roles, in particular, are important contexts for chronic stress and coping. When persistent stressors arise within one of these roles, they are likely to lead to problems in other roles. It is this proliferation of stressors over time that in part underlies the conceptualization of stress as a process. [The SSCP and the SCI indicate that these papers have been cited in more than 820 and 550 publications, making them the two most-cited papers published in this journal.]

view that was administered in a large-scale survey of residents of Chicago, which I chose because of its demographic diversity. We launched the survey in 1972, two years after we began the planning.

"The Structure of Coping" was among the first articles published from this survey. I hoped to demonstrate that coping is not driven solely by idiosyncratic personality imperatives, but also by people’s social and economic characteristics and by the nature of the stressors they confront and their roles. Roles, then, were regarded as important contexts in understanding both the chronic stressors to which people are exposed and their coping responses. Incidentally, Carmi Schooler became my coauthor as a result of the many good ideas he provided during our weekly racquetball games.

As analyses progressed on the survey, it became evident that social stress is not a one-time happening, but something that more typically emerges over time. About four years after the initial survey, therefore, I did a follow-up of the same sample to observe whether changes in people’s well-being were associated with changes in the stressful conditions of their lives. It was from the longitudinal data that we wrote "The Stress Process." A key finding from that work, one that I have taken into my subsequent research, is that serious and chronic problems are likely to give rise to other problems over time; stress begets stress. One cannot have a continuing job problem, for example, without becoming vulnerable to problems in other areas of life, such as the family. The proliferation of stressors is one of the factors that makes it appropriate to think of stress as a process, not as an event or ephemeral episode.

There has been an enormous body of research since we began to publish our work, including our own efforts to theoretically elaborate issues raised by these papers. I cannot be sure what effect these papers have had on the character of the research that followed, but I would like to think that they helped to bring a little conceptual clarity to a very untidy but important area of scholarly work.