I. Article #3:
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      1. http://www.csun.edu/~vcpsy00h/students/coping.htm
   B. Article Text #3:

   **Stress and Coping**

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   **Is Stress a Motivation or Emotion?**

   In the everyday usage of the word, motivation is defined as "a sense of need, desire,
   fear etc., that prompts an individual to act", and emotion is defined as "a strong
   feeling often accompanied by a physical reaction" (Webster's Dictionary, 1988).
   But in the field of psychology, both motivation and emotion are hypothetical
   constructs, processes which cannot be directly observed or studied. Motivation
   is thought of as a process that both energizes and directs goal-oriented
   behavior, as where emotions are subjective experiences, feelings that
   accompany motivational states (Weber, 1991). I believe that stress is primarily
   a process of motivation since it requires some sort of adaptation (coping) to the
   demand or set of demands. On the other hand, the emotions that we experience
   due to stress can also be studied. This does relate stress to emotions, but stress
   in itself is not considered a particular emotion. For example, one could
   experience different kinds of emotions due to stress, such as that of anger,
   anticipation, and fear.
Component Analysis of Coping

The effects of stress is directly linked to coping. The study of coping has evolved to encompass large variety of disciplines beginning with all areas of psychology such as health psychology, environmental psychology, neuro psychology and developmental psychology to areas of medicine spreading into the area of anthropology and sociology. Dissecting coping strategies into three broad components, (biological/physiological, cognitive, and learned) will provide a better understanding of what the seemingly immense area is about.

Biological/physiological component - The body has its own way of coping with stress. Any threat or challenge that an individual perceives in the environment triggers a chain of neuroendocrine events. These events can be conceptualized as two separate responses, that being of sympathetic/adrenal response, with the secretion of catecholamines (epinephrine, norepinephrine) and the pituitary/adrenal response, with the secretion of corticosteroids (Frankenhauser, 1986). The sympathetic/adrenal response takes the message from the brain to the adrenal medulla via the sympathetic nervous system, which secretes epinephrine and norepinephrine. This is the basic "fight or flight" response (Cannon, 1929), where the heart rate quickens and the blood pressure rises. In the pituitary/adrenal response, the hypothalamus is stimulated and produces the corticotrophin releasing factor (CRF) to the pituitary gland through the blood veins, then the adrenal corticotropic hormone (ACTH) is released from the pituitary gland to the adrenal cortex. The adrenal cortex in turn secretes cortisol,
a hormone that will report back to the original brain centers together with other
body organs to tell it to stop the whole cycle. But since cortisol is a potent
hormone, the prolonged secretion of it will lead to health problems such as the
break down of cardiovascular system, digestive system, musculoskeletal
system, and the recently established immune system. Also when the organism
does not have a chance for recovery, it will lead to both catecholamine and
corisol depletion and result in the third stage of the General Adaptation
Syndrome of exhaustion (Seyle, 1956).

Social support has also been established by studies to be linked to stress (Bolger &
Eckenerole, 1991; House, et. al, 1988). This can be seen as a dimension of the
biological component since it is closely linked to the biological environment of
that individual. There are many aspects to social support, the major categories
would be of emotional, tangible, and informational.

Personality types as so called Type A Personality have been defined to have such
characteristics as competitive, impatient and hostile. Hostility has been linked to
coronary heart disease which is thought be caused by stress (Rosenman, 1978).

Eysenck (1988) has coined the term Type C Personality for those who are
known to be repressors and are prone to cancer. Hardiness also is a personality
that seems to have much to do with how an individual handles stress. Hardiness
is defined as having a sense of control, commitment, and challenge towards life
in general. Kobasa (1979) has studied subjects who were laid off in large
numbers by AT&T when the federal deregulation took place, and found that the
people who were categorized as having hardy personalities were mentally and emotionally better off than the other. Although it may be possible to modifying ones personality, research has shown it to be heritable (Rahe, Herrig, & Rosenman, 1978; Parker, & Barret, 1992).

**Cognitive component** - The cognitive approach to coping is based on a mental process of how the individual appraises the situation. Where the level of appraisal determines the level of stress and the unique coping strategies that the individual partakes. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). There are two types of appraisals, the primary and the secondary. A primary appraisal is made when the individual makes a conscious evaluation of the matter at hand of whether it is either a harm or a loss, a threat or a challenge. Then secondary appraisal takes place when the individual asks him/herself "What can I do?" by evaluating the coping resources around him/her. These resources include, physical resources, such as how healthy one is, or how much energy one has, social resources, such as the family or friends one has to depend on for support in his/her immediate surroundings, psychological resources, such as self-esteem and self-efficacy, and also material resources such as how much money you have or what kind of equipment you might be able to use.

How much personal control one perceives to have is another factor to consider when looking at coping from the cognitive perspective. Usually an individual will find themselves feeling more stressful in uncontrollable situations. Also, since personal control is a cognitive process, the more one has a sense of personal
control, better sense of coping ability one will have. The categories of the attribution theory gives a good picture of the extreme ends of the "in control/lack of control" continuum. An individual will perceive to have the most control where the situations fit the categories of internal, transient, and specific. At the opposite end of the scale is the categories of external, stable, and global where the person will perceive lack of control.

There are other ways of to approach coping from a cognitive perspective such as that of constructive and destructive thinking as conceptualized by Epstein and Meier (1989) a similar concept to that of optimistic versus pessimistic (Taylor, 1991), the perceived level of self-efficacy and self-esteem and so on.

**Learned component** - The learned component of coping includes everything from various social learning theories, which assume that much of human motivation and behavior is the result of what is learned through experiential reinforcement, learned helplessness phenomena which is believed to have a relationship to depression, and even implications of the particular culture or society that the stress at hand is affected by can also be included in this component. Some of the examples for the social learning theories would be the wide range of stress management techniques that have been found to help ease stress. Changing how you cognitively process a particular situation, so called cognitive restructuring, changing how you behave in a particular situation, so called behavior modification, biofeedback which uses operant conditioning to alter involuntary responses mediated by the autonomic nervous system, and the numerous
relaxation techniques such as meditation, breathing, and exercise are all part of what is learned through experiential reinforcement. The learned helplessness phenomena has been linked to depression by such researchers as Coyne, Aldwin, and Lazarus (1981) when they studied subjects who tried to exert control when it was not possible to do so.

Cultures and societies have their own set of rules of what they perceive to be stressful or not (Colby, 1987). For example, educational systems differ greatly from culture to culture. In Asian cultures such as Japan and Korea, there is a great deal of importance attributed to how they do in schools. Access to higher education, leading to better jobs is determined solely through academic performance. The amount of stress that the students experience due to this is very high. High enough to report a number of suicides each year for not passing an important exam. People will have different responses in a monogamous culture to that of a polygamous culture. In Africa, where polygamy is the norm, when they find out that the significant other has another partner, it means more workforce to take care of the children and the household chores. If the husband does not take on many wives, it can become a strain on the rest of the wives.

An interesting study was done by using Holmes and Rahe's (1967) stressful life event measure in South Africa, and found that it correlated very little with standard distress measures (Swartz, Elk, & Teggin, 1983). This suggests the existence of such cultural/societal differences.
Theoretical Paradigms

Understanding how these three components integrate is fundamental to further understand the process of stress and coping. The transactions between the "mind" (cognition, and learning) and the "brain" (biological/physiological), and the role each play with regards to stress, has been in debate for decades.

The reductionist model of stress, comprises of a purely physiological perspective where the brain is the sole determinant of the presence of stress. In the interactionist model, both the brain and the mind affect stress, but it is still an uni-directional path from both the brain and the mind to stress. The transactionist model comprises of a bi-directional path, where stress in turn influences both the brain and the mind. Thus, by way of stress, the brain and the mind both mutually affect one another.

This model can also be applied to the process that is bound to come after stress, that of coping. In this model, stress is replaced by coping and the two factors can be thought of as the "environment" and the "person". As with the reductionist model for stress, simple responses to stressful environmental stimuli affects the person to choose a particular coping strategy. In the interactionist model of coping, both the environment and the person affect coping, also in an uni-directional way as in the model of stress. It has been found that the use of coping strategies is influenced by personality (Bolger, 1990), and also by the type of environment (Mattlin, Wethington, & Kessler, 1990). The transactionist
model of coping is a model that affects one another in all directions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Towards a New Theory of Coping

Many researchers who have studied subjects at midterms or finals and have found that coping is clearly a complex process, influenced by both personality characteristics (Bolger, 1990; Friedman et al., 1992; Long & Sangster, 1993), situational demands (Folkman & Lazarus, 1986; Heim et al., 1993), and even the social and physical characteristics of the setting (Mechanic, 1978).

As we have seen in the various theoretical paradigms of coping, every factor from physiological, psychological, social, to cultural, both affect and are affected by the coping strategies. Just as there is said to be an optimal level of stress for an individual to function most effectively, I propose that there is an optimal level of coping which minimizes cost and maximizes benefits on all levels of the various factors combined. A coping strategy that may work to improve a romantic relationship, may have it's negative social, cultural, or even psychological consequences. If you choose not to see your friends so that you have more time to spend with your romantic partner, or you choose to move in with that person when it is considered a cultural taboo, or you are so psychologically dominated by that person that you don't have a mind of your own. In such cases, the individual has the illusion that they are effectively coping with a particular stress, while what they are really doing is creating many others.
Also, since each factor has the power to influence the others, the true form of the transaction theory can only be captured when time is included as one of the variables. Longitudinal studies are crucial in order to truly reflect the long term effects and processes that takes place within the whole coping mechanism.

Web Resources

**Human Capital Initiative:** Reducing Mental Disorders - A Behavioral Science Research Plan for Psychopathology.

A national behavioral science research agenda that has been developed by the psychological science community to address critical areas of concern to this country. It specifically addresses the need to further investigate the effects that exposure to stress have on human immune system and the brain biochemistry. It also presses to clarify how coping can directly relate to reducing one's stress.

**Health Psychology - Stress and Coping.**

A thorough overview of the field of stress and coping in a easy to comprehend linking text formal. Useful since the important studies are mentioned and cited.

**The Health Resource Network.**

A non-profit health education organization committed to developing new and effective programs for improving people's health and well-being. Practical ideas and solutions are recommended by the organization to everyday stressors.

**The American Institute of Stress.**
A non-profit organization founded in 1978, to serve as a clearing house for information on all stress related subjects. They have a monthly newsletter which reports on the latest advances in stress research and related health topics not currently available via internet.

Parent Library: [Coping with Stress](#).

ERIC (Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education) at the University of Illinois Children's Research Center hosts this site by informing parents about how their children cope with stress and gives strategies for helping them.

Coping with Stress: [Adolescent Differences](#).

This site provides a summary of a five year study presented at the American Educational Research Association. The article discusses the different coping strategies that boys and girls use.

Mind Tools-Sports Psychology: [Stress Reduction Techniques](#).

A good source with practical examples to see how the various components (biological, cognitive, and learned) can each be targeted for stress reduction.

Research looks at how children fare in times of war.

A study that shows how children react differently to war, depending on their culture, national identity and family and community support systems.
Bibliography


Summary of the article