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DETACHMENT AND COPING: THE CONSTRUCTION AND VALIDATION OF A NEW SCALE FOR MEASURING COPING STRATEGIES

DEREK ROGER,[1] GLYN JARVIS[2] and BAHMAN NAJARIAN[3]

[1]Department of Psychology, University of York, Heslington, York, England, [2]Department of Clinical Psychology, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, Scotland and [3]Department of Psychology, University of Shahid Chamran, Ahwaz, Iran

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Summary—The present study describes the construction and validation of a new scale for measuring coping strategies entitled the Coping Styles Questionnaire (CSQ). Earlier studies had suggested that there were three primary coping components: task, emotion, and avoidance. In part, the validation of the CSQ confirmed these results, extracting factors concerned with problem-solving (Rational Coping, RATCOP), emotion (Emotional Coping, EMCOP) and avoidance (Avoidance Coping, AVCOP). However, a new factor was uncovered which tapped distancing or detachment (Detached Coping, DETCOP). Subsequent analyses suggested a grouping of two adaptive (RATCOP and DETCOP) and two maladaptive (EMCOP and AVCOP) coping styles, which was confirmed by the concurrent validation of the scale using the Emotion Control Questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

Coping is commonly defined in the literature as a process of adaptation to perceived threat. Thus Monat and Lazarus (1991) describe coping as "an individual's efforts to master demands (conditions of harm, threat or challenge) that are appraised (or perceived) as exceeding or taxing his or her resources" (p. 5). Coping processes are typically classified as having either rational or emotional connotations, but within this broad classification a variety of different strategies have been identified. For example, the 68-item Ways of Coping Checklist (WCC) devised by Folkman and Lazarus (1980) distinguised between problem- and emotion-focused scales, but in a subsequent factor analysis of the WCC, Aldwin, Folkman, Shaefer, Coyne and Lazarus (1980) extracted one problem-focused scale and six emotion-focused scales.

The WCC and its variants have enjoyed widespread popularity as indices of coping styles, but in fact the scales suffer from a number of psychometric shortcomings. For example, Aldwin *et al.* used a sample of just 100 *S*s to extract their seven factors. In a subsequent revision of the scale, Vitaliano, Russo, Carr, Maiuro and Becker (1985) used a satisfactory sample size (425 respondents) but relied on an eigenvalue-one criterion to determine factor extraction. The eigenvalue-one technique tends to extract too many factors containing too few items to represent reliable samples of the behaviour in question (see for example Comrey, 1978). Vitaliano *et al.* report factors comprising just three items, and although they quote eigenvalues for only four of their factors, a scree plot (Cattell, 1966) for these four data points shows a dramatic reduction in eigenvalue-difference between the third and fourth factors, thus confirming the suspicion that too many may have been extracted.

Folkman and Lazarus (1985) subsequently revised the WCC, altering items and reverting to a Likert scale rather than a dichotomized response format, but the construction of the new Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ) served only to compound the psychometric problems established in the earlier scale. For example, although 324 completed questionnaires were factor analysed, these were obtained from repeated administrations of the scale to a sample of 108 *S*s. The authors acknowledge in a footnote the inappropriateness of this procedure, but fail to provide an adequate justification for its use. Furthermore, too many factors are again extracted—eight are described, with half of them comprising fewer than five items each. The factoring procedures are not reported in detail, but the eigenvalue-one criterion was presumably used in this study as well.

In response to the many shortcomings in the WCC and WCQ, Endler and Parker (1990) have

recently devised the Multidimensional Coping Inventory (MCI). The factor analysis of this scale was based on a sample of 559 *S*s, using a scree test to arrive at a terminal solution comprising three factors: Task (19 items), Emotion (12 items) and Avoidance (13 items). Endler and Parker report substantial reliability data for their scales, and minimal confounding by social desirability. The authors also examined the relationship between the three factors and a series of established personality dimensions, and moderate correlations between their MCI Emotion factor and indices of depression and anxiety were interpreted as supporting the concurrent validation of the coping scales. The results obtained with the extraversion, psychoticism and neuroticism components of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ, Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) were less clear, but this may reflect psychometric problems with the EPQ scales themselves (see Roger & Morris, 1991).

The MCI thus represents a clarification of the earlier attempts to identify coping dimensions, and the three primary theoretical constructs of task, emotional and avoidance coping are clearly described by the extracted factors. However, inspection of sample items from the scale suggests a degree of overlap amongst the factors which would impair their empirical discriminability. For example, although item 27 ('Daydream about a better time or place') loads exclusively on the emotion factor, it would appear to be concerned more with escape or avoidance than with the explicitly emotional connotations carried by other items on the factor. The same might be said for item 64, "Fantasize about how things might turn out", and indeed, the emotion and avoidance components of the MCI are significantly positively correlated.

Overall, the findings to date suggest that there is still considerable scope for the refinement of coping scales, and the present paper reports on the construction of a new instrument entitled the Coping Styles Questionnaire (CSQ). In part, the construction of the CSQ provides confirmation for the three-factor structure reported elsewhere. However, factor analysis of the preliminary questionnaire uncovered a stable cluster of items relating to a feeling of detachment from stressful events. This finding confirmed anecdotal evidence obtained during the validation of a stress management programme based on emotion control strategies (Roger, 1992), where *S*s reported that the less involved they felt with events the more effectively they were able to cope. Their accounts suggested that feeling detached did not involve denial or attempts to avoid stress, and that detachment could also be distinguished from task-oriented strategies. Clinical observation thus suggested that detachment might represent a critical but neglected factor in determining coping efficacy, and this new dimension was developed as part of the construction and validation of the CSQ.

METHOD

Subjects

A total of 521 *S*s took part in the factor analyses performed in this study, 294 females and 227 males. Of these, 210 were Open University students attending summer school at the University of York (mean age 26.89 years; SD 5.49) and 311 were University of York undergraduates (mean age 21.17; SD 3.95).

Scale construction

The initial item pool for the questionnaire was created from a variety of sources: the first author's experience in stress management training, consultations with colleagues, reference to the clinical literature, and existing scales such as the WCC. After deleting duplicates, an initial pool of 78 items was completed anonymously by the sample of 210 Open University students, using a four-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "always". The responses to all 78 items were then subjected to principal factoring, and rotated to a four-factor terminal solution following a scree test. For the first three factors the results suggested a structure similar to that reported in earlier coping scales: a rational or task-oriented factor (highest loading: "Work out a plan for dealing with what has happened"), an emotion-oriented factor ("Feel overpowered and at the mercy of the situation"), and an avoidance factor ("Daydream about times when things were better"). The final factor was mixed, but the cluster of 5 highest-loading items all described a feeling of being detached from the events (for example, "Feel independent of the circumstances").

Further factor analyses in which the terminal solution was obtained using both orthogonal and oblique rotations to extract three and five factors still left the cluster of detachment items intact, but there were too few of them to warrant isolation as a distinct factor. A revised questionnaire was therefore created by adding new detachment items. Some were generated from the validation of the stress management training programme described in the Introduction (Roger, 1992), but others were obtained from a "scenario" study in which *S*s were given descriptions of stressful events (for example, being reprimanded) and asked to list their typical responses. This technique was piloted in the earlier development of the Emotion Control Questionnaire (ECQ, Roger & Nesshoever, 1987; Roger & Najarian, 1989), and has proved to be a particularly fruitful source of potential questionnaire items.

Twelve new detachment items were generated in this way and added to the original scale, bringing the total number of items to 90. These were then administered to the second sample of 311 University of York undergraduates, again using a 4-point Likert scale format. In order to avoid the problem of extracting too many factors, a scree test (Cattell, 1966) was used instead of the eigenvalue-one criterion to determine factor extraction. The responses were rotated to a four-factor terminal solution, and using a cut-off of 0.30, 60 items loaded significantly on the four factors. The 60-item scale appears in the Appendix, and the loadings for the items included on each factor are shown in Table 1.

The first factor included 16 items, and with the highest loading on item 16, "Try to find out more information to help make a decision about things", the factor was labelled Rational Coping (RATCOP). The highest loading amongst the 15 items loading on factor 2 was No. 45, "Just take nothing personally", and this factor was labelled Detached Coping (DETCOP). Factor 3, labelled Emotional Coping (EMCOP), comprised 16 items, with the highest loading on item 41 ("Feel worthless and unimportant"). The highest loading for the fourth factor was on item 42, "Trust in fate—that things have a way of working out for the best"; the factor comprised 13 items, and was labelled Avoidance Coping (AVCOP). Separate analyses for the male and female sub-samples resulted in comparable factor structures, and a second analysis of the data based on an oblique rotation made no significant difference to the structure of the four-factor solution.

The responses of the 311 *S*s to the 60 items forming the final scale were then used to assess the correlations amongst the four factors, and these are displayed in Table 2. Separate matrices for the male and female samples revealed only negligible differences between them, and the coefficients are based on the combined sample. The means, ranges and standard deviations on each factor are also displayed in the table, and are shown separately for males ($N = 149$) and females ($N = 162$).

The data show a tendency for males to use more detached and rational and less emotional coping styles than females, but the differences were not statistically significant. The correlations amongst the factors suggest two clusters, with positive correlations between RATCOP and DETCOP and between EMCOP and AVCOP. RATCOP and DETCOP also correlated significantly negatively with EMCOP, and although the correlations between these two factors and AVCOP were either marginal or non-significant, the pattern of results indicate that the first cluster represents adaptive coping strategies and the second cluster maladaptive coping strategies.

Reliability

Test–retest. After an inter-test interval of 3 months, the CSQ was sent to 90 of the females and 64 of the males in the sample of 311 York undergraduates. Returns were received from 65 (72%) of the females and 51 (80%) of the males, and the re-test coefficients for the combined sample for the RATCOP, DETCOP, EMCOP and AVCOP factors were 0.801, 0.794, 0.766 and 0.701, respectively. The differences between separate re-test correlations for males and females were negligible.

Internal consistency. A high overall internal consistency would not be expected for a multidimensional questionnaire, but satisfactory coefficient alphas were obtained for each of the four factors separately: RATCOP 0.853, DETCOP 0.897, EMCOP 0.735, and AVCOP 0.690. The mean inter-item correlations ranged from 0.232 for AVCOP to 0.388 for RATCOP, and fell within the optimal range suggested by Briggs and Cheek (1986).

Table 1. Factor loadings for the CSQ items

Item	Loading			
	Factor 1 (RATCOP)	Factor 2 (DETCOP)	Factor 3 (EMCOP)	Factor 4 (AVCOP)
16	+0.642			
35	+0.554			
12	+0.547			
57	+0.545			
39	+0.529			
36	+0.522			
43	+0.495			
58	+0.471			
2	+0.464			
24	+0.464			
9	+0.448			
30	+0.425			
47	+0.389			
18	+0.329			
26	+0.310			
48	+0.300			
45		+0.667		
32		+0.660		
40		+0.636		
3		+0.560		
55		+0.554		
29		+0.550		
4		+0.537		
19		+0.518		
27		+0.485		
13		+0.434		
8		+0.429		
33		+0.421		
52		+0.402		
50		+0.389		
23		+0.302		
41			+0.662	
10			+0.661	
49			+0.590	
25			+0.568	
5			+0.543	
6			+0.532	
14			+0.511	
15			+0.510	
54			+0.469	
46			+0.449	
56			+0.444	
7			+0.426	
21			+0.399	
34			+0.387	
37			+0.340	
1			+0.340	
42				+0.565
17				+0.554
31				0.536
53				0.535
28				0.532
59				0.499
51				0.480
44				0.459
38				0.445
20				0.442
60				0.427
22				0.406
11				0.340

RATCOP = Rational Coping, DETCOP = Detached Coping, EMCOP = Emotional Coping, AVCOP = Avoidance Coping.

Concurrent validity

Concurrent validation of coping scales such as the MCI have confirmed the predicted relationships with anxiety and depression scales, although Endler and Parker (1990) reported less clear-cut results for the Eysenck personality dimensions. These authors interpreted the variability in the findings as providing support for the multidimensionality of coping, although they may also reflect the psychometric complexity of the EPQ scales themselves—the structure of psychoticism, for example, is extremely heterogeneous (Roger & Morris, 1991). In the present study, the ECQ (Roger & Najarian, 1989) was chosen as the appropriate scale against which to validate the CSQ.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlations amongst CSQ factors

	RATCOP	DETCOP	EMCOP	AVCOP
		Factor correlations		
RATCOP	—	+0.492**	−0.405**	−0.106*
DETCOP			−0.272**	−0.051
EMCOP				+0.327**
		Descriptive statistics		
Mean (SD)				
Males	27.26 (5.83)	18.71 (6.42)	16.80 (6.11)	15.38 (5.0)
Females	24.28 (6.45)	16.01 (4.87)	18.22 (5.94)	15.69 (5.37)
Range				
Males	7–42	0–38	1–33	2–29
Females	4–40	4–41	2–37	3–30

RATCOP = Rational Coping, DETCOP = Detached Coping, EMCOP = Emotional Coping, AVCOP = Avoidance Coping.

The ECQ scales of rehearsal and emotional inhibition have a particular bearing on emotional response style, and have been shown to relate in predictable ways to indices of delayed physiological recovery following stress (Roger, 1988; Roger & Jamieson, 1988). The benign control and aggression control components of the ECQ form part of the extraversion constellation, with benign control in particular correlating strongly with indices of impulsiveness (Roger & Nesshoever, 1987). Although there is no strong theoretical reason why extraversion should be related to coping styles, the scales were included in the validation as a check on the findings reported by Endler and Parker. Scores on the ECQ were obtained from 92 *S*s (42 males and 50 females) drawn from the sample of York undergraduates, and the matrix of correlations amongst the ECQ and CSQ factors is shown in Table 3.

ECQ rehearsal measures the tendency to ruminate on emotionally upsetting events, and has been shown to relate to delayed physiological recovery from stress (Roger, 1988; Roger & Jamieson, 1988). The table shows that rehearsal was significantly negatively correlated with both of the adaptive coping styles (RATCOP and DETCOP), and significantly positively correlated with both of the maladaptive styles (EMCOP and AVCOP). Benign control, which measures impulsiveness, correlated significantly with three of the coping styles, but in the opposite direction to rehearsal. The items for benign control are negatively keyed, with high scores representing less impulsivity, and the results thus show that impulsives tend to employ relatively more emotional, and less rational and detached, coping styles. Emotional inhibition correlated significantly positively with AVCOP, but not with the other coping scales, while there were no significant correlations between aggression control and the CSQ factors.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Scales for assessing coping strategies typically describe three primary components or themes: rational (or task), emotional, and avoidance. The development of the CSQ confirmed this structure, yielding scales for rational coping (RATCOP), emotional coping (EMCOP) and avoidance coping (AVCOP), but added a new style concerned with detachment (DETCOP). The detachment scale is defined by the feeling of being independent of the event and the emotion associated with it, and the concept arose from follow-up studies of a stress management programme based on emotion control (Roger, 1992). Not surprisingly, the scale is inversely correlated with emotional coping, and

Table 3. Correlations between the CSQ and ECQ scales

		CSQ			
		RATCOP	DETCOP	EMCOP	AVCOP
ECQ	R	−0.355**	−0.486**	+0.511**	+0.236*
	E-I	−0.141	+0.171	+0.121	+0.385**
	AC	+0.067	+0.022	+0.010	+0.054
	BC	+0.210*	+0.258*	−0.301**	−0.148

RATCOP = Rational Coping, DETCOP = Detached Coping, EMCOP = Emotional Coping, AVCOP = Avoidance Coping. R = Rehearsal, E-I = Emotional Inhibition, AC = Aggression Control, BC = Benign Control.

the pattern of correlations amongst the four scales suggests a grouping of two adaptive styles (detached and rational) and two maladaptive styles (emotional and avoidance).

Earlier scale construction exercises also reported positive correlations between the emotional and avoidance factors, but this may have been attributable to item overlap. The emotion factor on the MCI (Endler & Parker, 1990), for example, contains daydreaming items which appear to be concerned more with avoidance than explicitly emotional responses; the two daydreaming items on the CSQ (11 and 38) both load on the avoidance factor. On the other hand, the CSQ avoidance factor drew items concerned with emotional inhibition (for example, 17 and 28), which would account in part for the significant positive correlation between CSQ avoidance and the emotional inhibition scale of the ECQ.

The retest reliability coefficients for the CSQ factors were all substantial, although in common with the MCI devised by Endler and Parker (1990), the figures were somewhat lower for the emotional and avoidance factors. Nonetheless, the lowest correlation was 0.701, and the four factors clearly represent relatively stable ways of responding to stressful events. The scales were also internally consistent, with alpha coefficients in excess of 0.800 for both of the adaptive strategies.

For the concurrent validation, scores on the CSQ were correlated with scores on the ECQ (Roger & Najarian, 1989). The ECQ has been shown to be related to indices of delayed recovery from stress, and was chosen as an appropriate candidate for the validation exercise. The analyses yielded a consistent pattern of results, with the tendency to ruminate on emotionally upsetting events (ECQ Rehearsal) correlating significantly positively with both of the maladaptive CSQ scales and significantly negatively with both of the adaptive scales. As has been mentioned above, ECQ emotional inhibition was significantly positively correlated with AVCOP, a relationship which is attributable in part to the inclusion of inhibition items on AVCOP. Unlike rehearsal, emotional inhibition was not significantly correlated with the remaining CSQ factors, but the two ECQ scales have been shown to be statistically orthogonal to one another. It has been suggested that the effects of emotional inhibition and rehearsal may be additive (Roger, 1992), so that *S*s who score high on both scales have even longer recovery times than those who score high on either one independently, and research is currently in progress investigating the interactive effects of emotion control and coping strategies on adaptational behaviour.

The aggression control and benign control scales from the ECQ tend to correlate positively, and are thought to form part of the extraversion constellation (Roger & Najarian, 1989). Certainly, benign control correlates highly significantly with indices of impulsiveness, and is related to heart-rate reactivity under arousal conditions (Roger & Nesshoever, 1987; Roger & Jamieson, 1988). Benign control is keyed in the direction of low scorers being more impulsive, and as may be expected, the pattern of significant correlations between this scale and the RATCOP, DETCOP and EMCOP factors from the CSQ suggests that impulsives engage in more emotional and less detached and rational coping styles. Aggression control was not significantly correlated with any of the CSQ factors, and although aggression control and benign control are themselves correlated, the coefficients tend to be modest. These results indicate that the two ECQ scales are empirically discriminable, a finding which has been reported elsewhere (McDougall, Venables & Roger, 1991).

As well as confirming earlier studies of coping style, the present findings indicate that the previously neglected dimension of detachment may significantly influence the relationship between stress and illness. The results argue for a more comprehensive study of the interactive effects of personality and coping strategies on adaptation to stress, and a research project investigating these effects is currently in progress. The results also suggest ways in which coping styles might be integrated into stress management programmes, using the distinction between adaptive and maladaptive strategies to enhance the repertoire of behaviour available to *S*s suffering from stress.

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APPENDIX

CSQ items

Instructions: although people may react in different ways to different situations, we all tend to have a characteristic way of dealing with things which upset us. How would you describe the way you *typically* react to stress? Circle Always (A), Often (O), Sometimes (S), or Never (N) for **each** item below:

1. Feel overpowered and at the mercy of the situation.	A	O	S	N
2. Work out a plan for dealing with what has happened.	A	O	S	N
3. See the situation for what it actually is and nothing more.	A	O	S	N
4. See the problem as something separate from myself so I can deal with it.	A	O	S	N
5. Become miserable or depressed.	A	O	S	N
6. Feel that no-one understands.	A	O	S	N
7. Stop doing hobbies or interests.	A	O	S	N
8. Do not see the problem or situation as a threat.	A	O	S	N
9. Try to find the positive side to the situation.	A	O	S	N
10. Become lonely or isolated.	A	O	S	N
11. Daydream about times in the past when things were better.	A	O	S	N
12. Take action to change things.	A	O	S	N
13. Have presence of mind when dealing with the problem or circumstances.	A	O	S	N
14. Avoid family or friends in general.	A	O	S	N
15. Feel helpless—there's nothing you can do about it.	A	O	S	N
16. Try to find out more information to help make a decision about things.	A	O	S	N
17. Keep things to myself and not let others know how bad things are for me.	A	O	S	N
18. Think about how someone I respect would handle the situation and try to do the same.	A	O	S	N
19. Feel independent of the circumstances.	A	O	S	N
20. Sit tight and hope it all goes away.	A	O	S	N
21. Take my frustrations out on the people closest to me.	A	O	S	N
22. 'Distance' myself so I don't have to make any decision about the situation.	A	O	S	N
23. Resolve the issue by not becoming identified with it.	A	O	S	N
24. Assess myself or the problem without getting emotional.	A	O	S	N
25. Cry, or feel like crying.	A	O	S	N
26. Try to see things from the other person's point of view.	A	O	S	N
27. Respond neutrally to the problem.	A	O	S	N
28. Pretend there's nothing the matter, even if people ask what's bothering me.	A	O	S	N
29. Get things into proportion—nothing is really that important.	A	O	S	N
30. Keep reminding myself about the good things about myself.	A	O	S	N
31. Feel that time will sort things out.	A	O	S	N
32. Feel completely clear-headed about the whole thing.	A	O	S	N
33. Try to keep a sense of humour—laugh at myself or the situation.	A	O	S	N
34. Keep thinking it over in the hope that it will go away.	A	O	S	N
35. Believe that I can cope with most things with the minimum of fuss	A	O	S	N

36. Try not to let my heart rule my head.	A	O	S	N
37. Eat more (or less) than usual.	A	O	S	N
38. Daydream about things getting better in future.	A	O	S	N
39. Try to find a logical way of explaining the problem.	A	O	S	N
40. Decide it's useless to get upset and just get on with things.	A	O	S	N
41. Feel worthless and unimportant.	A	O	S	N
42. Trust in fate—that things have a way of working out for the best.	A	O	S	N
43. Use my past experience to try deal with the situation.	A	O	S	N
44. Try to forget the whole thing.	A	O	S	N
45. Just take nothing personally.	A	O	S	N
46. Become irritable or angry.	A	O	S	N
47. Just give the situation my full attention.	A	O	S	N
48. Just take one step at a time.	A	O	S	N
49. Criticise or blame myself.	A	O	S	N
50. Simply and quickly disregard all irrelevant information.	A	O	S	N
51. Pray that things will just change.	A	O	S	N
52. Think or talk about the problem as if it did not belong to me.	A	O	S	N
53. Talk about it as little as possible.	A	O	S	N
54. Prepare myself for the worst possible outcome.	A	O	S	N
55. Feel completely calm in the face of any adversity.	A	O	S	N
56. Look for sympathy and understanding from people.	A	O	S	N
57. See the thing as a challenge that must be met.	A	O	S	N
58. Be realistic in my approach to the situation.	A	O	S	N
59. Try to think about or do something else.	A	O	S	N
60. Do something that will make me feel better.	A	O	S	N