Issues in Occupational Health

SERIES EDITORS

Tom Cox and Amanda Griffiths

Coping, Health and Organizations

EDITED BY

Philip Dewe
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CRC PRESS

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Boca Raton London New York Washington, D.C.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Catalog record is available from the Library of Congress

Direct all inquiries to CRC Press LLC, 2000 N.W. Corporate Blvd., Boca Raton, Florida 33431.

Visit the CRC Press Web site at www.crcpress.com

International Standard Book Number 0-748-40824-X
Printed in the United States of America 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
Printed on acid-free paper

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Cary L. Cooper is BUPA Professor of Organizational Psychology and Health in the Manchester School of Management, and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (External Activities) of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST). He is author of over 80 books (on occupational stress, women at work and industrial and organizational psychology), has written over 300 articles for academic journals, and is a frequent contributor to the media. He is Founding Editor of the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and Co-Editor of *Stress Medicine* and the *International Journal of Management Review*. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, The Royal Society of Arts, the Royal Society of Medicine, the Royal Society of Health and the (American) Academy of Management. Professor Cooper is President of the British Academy of Management, and Companion of the (British) Institute of Management. He recently published a major report for the European Union's European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Work Conditions on *Stress Prevention in the Workplace*.

Robin S. Cox received her MA in Counselling Psychology from the University of British Columbia in 1996. Her master's thesis utilised feminist critical theory to explore feminist therapy and its impact on the feminist anti-violence movement. She is currently employed as a community counsellor and advocate working in collaboration with a police-based domestic violence unit. Her research interests include policy and practice issues pertaining to violence against women, organizational learning and health paradigms and their impact on working women, and collaborative feminist research methodologies.

Tom Cox is currently Professor of Organizational Psychology and Director of the Institute of Work, Health and Organizations in the University of Nottingham Business School. The Institute is a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre in Occupational Health, and a Lead Topic

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Esther Greenglass has been teaching and conducting research at York University in Toronto since 1968. Professor Greenglass has published several books, journal articles and research reports in the areas of health psychology and the psychlogy of women. Some of her areas of interest are psychology of women, Type A behaviour, stress, burnout and coping. Most recently she has developed the Proactive Coping Inventory (with Ralf Schwarzer), a coping measure which focuses on the positive aspects of human potentional and takes a proactive rather than a reactive approach to the study of stress management. Her ongoing research with Ronald Burke focuses on psychological effects of hospital restructuring on nurses.

Michael P. Leiter is Professor of Psychology and Vice President (Academic) of Acadia University in Canada. He is Director of the Center for Organizational Research and Development, which applies high quality research methods to human resource issues confronting organizations. He developed the Staff Survey for assessing the way people perceive complex organizations. This approach to organizational life arose from his extensive work with organizations undergoing major organizational change in North America and in Europe. He received degrees in psychology from Duke University (BA), Vanderbilt University (MA), and the University of Oregon (PhD). He teaches courses on organizational psychology and on stress at Acadia University. The research centre provides a lively bridge between university studies and organizational consultation for himself and his students.

Bonita C. Long is Professor of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia, where she earned her PhD in interdisciplinary studies. She has published numerous articles on workplace stress and coping and has co-edited *Women, Work, and Coping: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Workplace Stress* (1993), published by McGill Queen's University Press. Her current projects focus on the influence of interindividual and intraindividual processes related to coping with occupational stress on a daily basis, and examine the dialectics of resistance and accommodation within the dominant stress discourse.

Catherine Loughlin completed her PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology at Queen's University, Kingston in 1998, winning provincial and national academic awards as well as an Outstanding Research Award. She has spent the last year at the Queen's School of Business on a research fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Dr Loughlin has published empirical papers in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* and the *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, and co-authored book chapters on acute work stress, chronic work stress, workplace health and safety, and the quality of youth employment. Currently she is at the University of Toronto and teaches in the area of organizational behaviour.

Miranda Olff is a Senior Scientist in the Department of Prevention at Trimbos Institute (Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction). Until recently she was doing research in the Department of Clinical Psychology at the University of Groningen on the effect of stress, and the treatment of depression on the immune and endocrine system as well being a Visiting Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Lund, Sweden where she worked in the area of stress, coping and health. Among her many professional activities she took part in the European Astronaut Selection Study for the European Space Agency. Dr Olff has published widely on the subjects of stress, coping and subjective health, and is at present working on projects in areas such as prevention of work stress and subjective health problems, and coping styles and psychobiological mechanisms in several populations.

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Preface: Coping, health and organizations

Michael Leiter, Louise Thomson, Philip Dewe and Tom Cox

The way in which their work is designed and managed can challenge people working in organizations. This book is about those challenges, about how people cope with them, and about how coping can moderate the effects of work on health. To fulfil their obligation to help people cope, managers and researchers need a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of coping in the work context. The chapters that follow approach these fundamentals from diverse and complementary perspectives. The objective is to develop a model of coping that is of practical benefit while furthering the development of theory.

Part 1 of the book is concerned with theoretical and psychometric considerations. It begins with a review and critique by Dewe of the various meanings and measures associated with the notion of coping at work. In asking the question 'What is it that we are trying to achieve when measuring coping?', Chapter 1 reviews a number of alternative measurement approaches, the contexts in which they should be applied, and the inconsistencies that exist in research today. In answering this question, Dewe's chapter examines the progress that has been made in the measurement of coping with work stress within the context of good psychometric practice: theoretical context, item derivation, scale instructions and scoring, and scale classification.

Dewe's chapter is followed by one written by Edwards and Baglioni that argues for reliable, valid measures of coping, and that compares measurement techniques driven by empirical considerations with those driven by theory. Using statistical techniques such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis, they compare the empirically-driven Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Folkman and Lazarus (1988) Manual for the Ways of Coping Questionnaire, Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press) with the theoretically-driven Cybernetic Coping Scale (Edwards and Baglioni (1993) 'The measurement of coping with stress: construct validity of the Ways of Coping Checklist and the Cybernetic Coping Scale', *Work and Stress* 7:17–31) providing further information on the validity and reliability of the two scales. Edwards and Baglioni conclude by saying that the evidence suggests clear advantages of the theoretical approach compared with the empirical one. Applied in the present context, the theoretical approach to measurement development provides greater assurance that

measures address the real diversity of coping in occupational settings. Among other things, it is important that the theoretical constructs shaping measurement development are responsive to the changing demands and opportunities that confront employees in dynamic workplaces.

The final chapter in the section is by Rosenbaum, and focuses on the self-regulation of experiences of coping, and, in particular, on two types of self-control responses: openness and construction. Rosenbaum approaches such coping by differentiating between openness to experience as an unfolding event and a constructive response that fits experience into re-existing frames of reference. While acknowledging the somewhat artificial quality of this dichotomy, he explores its implications for a framework of coping behaviour. Some coping responses are attempts to exert control over events, framing them within a problem solving approach based upon one's understanding of events. Other coping responses, such as relaxation procedures, focus more closely upon one's response to events. Rosenbaum argues that both perspectives are consistent with the development of greater self-control, and are required to cope effectively. That is, effective coping requires an ability to accept, openly and non-judgementally, the stresses that one encounters, and also to reframe and interpret the experience of stress constructively on the basis of one's existing theories and constructs. This chapter takes a somewhat different approach to the previous two, based on a philosophical differentiation of psychological experiences. It explores the implications of such an approach for a framework to understand coping behaviour.

The varieties of coping considered in this book encompass both the openness and the construction perspectives described by Rosenbaum. However, reflecting the balance in the literature, the book gives much more emphasis to the constructivist approach than to the open perspective. For the most part the chapters depict people as active agents who address difficulties by taking control both cognitively and behaviourally. The environments considered by the authors are often seen as too hostile to permit open responses, such as relaxation and accepting experience. The authors depict the challenges of unemployment, discrimination and large-scale disasters as requiring active intervention from people as individuals, members of working groups or entire organizations.

The second part of the book focuses on particular work-related problems and their relationship to coping.

Chapter 4 by Loughlin and Barling reviews the literature on the effects of acute workplace disasters on employee health and well-being, and discusses how individuals cope with such situations. The authors examine the effects of both natural and technological disasters on the victims and the rescue workers and volunteers involved. Evidence concerning the importance of control, support and organizational responsibility in coping with disasters is explored.

Greenglass' chapter examines the relationship between work and family, in particular focusing on coping with work-family conflict. A number of models and hypotheses are considered that concern the effects that might arise in

relation to the work-family interface, such as the buffering model of work, the scarcity hypothesis, the spillover model, and the social exchange approach. Strategies to cope with the negative effects of work-family role conflict are described both at the individual level (e.g. influencing the role environment, social support) and at the organizational level (e.g. flexible work schedules, sick leave for dependent care). Furthermore, Greenglass proposes that alternative career models are needed to enhance the positive effects of multiple roles.

The chapter by Long and Cox focuses on the potential impact of occupational stressors on women's physical and mental health. Taking a social constructivist approach, it reviews the research that focuses on employed women's ways of coping with stress, and describes problems with the research and conceptualization of stress and coping. Long and Cox argue that research has tended to conceptualize women's experience of occupational stress and coping strategies as singularly different from that of men on the basis of gender rather than other factors such as cultural context, social expectations or other individual differences. They posit that women's occupational stress and coping takes place in a cultural context, reflecting an unequal distribution of power and resources. Therefore they emphasize the need for researchers to consider these contextual issues of power and status, rather than focus on the individual woman and her coping pattern.

Leiter is the first of a number of authors to consider coping in terms of the Nottingham organizational health model. According to this model, the availability and effectiveness of coping responses is closely related to the healthiness of the work setting. Each of the three primary social environments of organizations (problem-solving, task and development) presents distinct challenges and facilitates distinct coping responses. The development environment is the specific focus of Leiter's chapter considering the impact of role expansion on hospital workers. Effective coping with the demands of skill enhancement requires not only effective learning strategies, but the capacity to interact within a social context characterized by conflicting demands and expectations. The development of mentoring relationships was a key means for middle managers to cope with the demands of role expansion. Not only did these relationships provide direct advice and training relevant to new challenges, they provided a means to communicate with management. Talking with a mentor about training needs indicates to senior management shortfalls in the existing training procedures, while providing an indicator of the strains being experienced by employees.

The final chapter in Part 2 by Eriksen, Olff and Ursin describes the diverse impact of unresolved stress experiences on health of both the individual and the organization. This perspective emphasizes the significance of non-specific symptoms of illness for individual well-being and on attendance and performance at work. The chapter reviews the effectiveness of different levels of interventions to reduce this impact, including health promotion, organizational interventions such as job redesign, and individual coping strategies

such as physical exercise and relaxation. Eriksen and colleagues argue that more scope and experimental rigour is needed in such research studies in order to establish the link between individual and organizational health.

The third and final section deals with organizational interventions. The first chapter, by Cox and Thomson provides a framework for those that follow. It considers the relationship between stress and the healthiness of organizations. Using the concept of organizational healthiness, which combines the socio-technical theory of organization with the individual health analogy, Chapter 9 examines the organizational context to work-related stress, employee health and coping. Cox and Thomson argue that employee health can be affected by organizational healthiness via the two interacting mechanisms of the design and management of work, and the experience of stress and the organization's impact on employee behaviour at work, including coping.

Burke and Richardsen's chapter reviews eleven organizational-level interventions to reduce occupational stressors, and evaluates current knowledge of their effectiveness. Chapter 10 describes the two approaches to organizational-level interventions: the enhancement of individuals and their resources, and the reduction of work-placed sources of occupational stress. Of the eleven interventions reviewed, the majority were based on the second approach, and the authors conclude that the interventions were generally found to have positive effects. Given these indications and the limited success of individual-level interventions, Burke and Richardsen encourage researchers to design scientific studies to implement and evaluate organizational-level stress management interventions.

The chapter by Berridge and Cooper examines the role of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) in coping with the stress of new organizational challenges. The authors define the EAP, review its historical development and rapid growth, and its current coverage in the US, Britain and Australia. Four principal EAP models are described and evaluated and the controversy over the appropriate method for evaluating EAPs discussed. Berridge and Cooper highlight the fact that, despite the seemingly high level of acceptance of EAPs, there is a variety of critical arguments concerning aspects of their philosophical and therapeutic bases, their organizational impact, their legal position, and their role in the management of people at work. Much of the focus of these programmes is developing a supportive relationship providing personal counselling in a group or individual format. Relaxation training, self-esteem building and self acceptance play an important role in these types of interventions. They tend to develop employees' capacity to adjust to organizational realities rather than develop a perspective to re-evaluate or change the organization. The organization is accepted as a necessary if not benign reality with which individuals had best learn to cope effectively. The target of organizational interventions is developing an environment in which people feel sufficiently secure to support an open perspective. Coping occurs within a social context that facilitates some responses while discouraging others. Unhealthy organizational environments

impede the use of effective coping by threatening the well-being and self-esteem of an organization and by undermining their attempts to use active coping responses.

This chapter is followed by one by Burke and Leiter discussing contemporary organizational realities as newly emerging sources of stress, and their influence on personal and professional efficacy. The chapter reviews the available literature regarding four of these emerging sources of stress: mergers and acquisitions, budget cuts, job future ambiguity, and occupational lock-in. Burke and Leiter propose that these new stressors require coping on the level of both the individual (e.g. EAPs, career counselling and retraining) and the organization (such as communication, controlling the speed of change and conflict and resistance management). They suggest that the development of a problem-solving perspective that encourages action-oriented coping in the form of building a new psychological contract is particularly important.

The last chapter in this section is by Terry, Callan and Sartori, and examines the utility of a stress-coping model of employee adjustment to organizational change. They present findings from recent research testing the utility of the model that suggests that both situational appraisals and coping responses mediated the effects of organizational merger event characteristics and coping resources on employee adjustment. Their research points to the need for organizations to consult with employees prior to change about the implementation of the change, and during the change to ensure that there is effective leadership, that there are adequate sources of support, and that employees are kept informed about the change process.

To conclude the book, Dewe, Cox and Leiter describe an agenda for the future for work stress and coping researchers, focusing on three issues: definitions of stress and coping, theoretical context and measurement. They call for the affirmation of a definition of stress that best provides a structure to systematic theoretical and research enquiry that will make a significant contribution to understanding the stress process. The growing acceptance that stress should be viewed as a transaction between the individual and the environment is recognized as providing such a research opportunity. They argue that the theoretical context within which work-stress research should be carried out must be process-oriented and provide the framework for investigating the dynamics of work stress and coping. Theoretical models need to describe the mechanisms through which the stress process develops and by which the individual and environment are linked. Finally, the authors challenge researchers to examine what alternative methodologies can provide in the measurement of the stress-coping process. The issue concerns whose reality we are measuring when we measure stress and coping, where current methodologies actually take us, and what more we could understand by using other measures of the stress process.

The wealth of research and thinking about coping in organizational settings provides a solid base for articulating with increasing thoroughness theories that integrate coping behaviour within a framework of organizational func-

tioning. It was a primary goal of this book to bring together current work that can contribute to that development. We hope that the integration of ideas presented here help to support ambitious research efforts to understand coping more thoroughly. This research effort requires qualitative research strategies to ensure the development of ideas that remain sensitive to the major changes in the nature of work in post-industrial societies. It also requires extensive, longitudinal, quantitative research efforts that investigate ideas that have been developed and continue to be. Studies that track coping behaviour over time, as well as research that investigates the impact of interventions intended to enhance coping effectiveness will make significant contributions to understanding the nature of coping itself and its development.

PART ONE

Theoretical and psychometric considerations

CHAPTER ONE

Measures of coping with stress at work: a review and critique

PHILIP DEWE

Despite three decades of investigations into the phenomena of stress, and an explosion of research into how individuals cope (Aldwin and Revenson, 1987), the coping literature remains diverse (Endler and Parker, 1990), difficult to organize (Edwards, 1988) and fraught with problems (Cohen, 1987). Coping studies that focus on work stress have been described as being in their infancy (Kuhlmann, 1990), limited somewhat in their scope (George, Brief and Webster, 1991) and few in number (Latack, 1986). On the other hand, advice as to the direction coping should take has been relatively consistent. Reviewers (Burke and Weir, 1980; Dewe, Cox and Ferguson, 1993; Edwards, 1988; Newton, 1989; Schuler, 1984) have had little difficulty in identifying the issues that need to be addressed. These include the meanings of stress and coping, the measurement of coping strategies and the role of coping in the stress process.

Defining work stress

It is almost traditional, as Vingerhoets and Marcelisson (1988) suggest, for writers on stress to begin by pointing to the lack of agreement when defining the term. The fact that stress has been discussed so often has led some authors (Beehr and Frariz, 1987) to express their frustration and suggest that there must surely be more important issues that need confronting other than the choice of a label or term. At another level others argue (Eulberg, Weekley and Bhagat, 1988) that when defining stress we should avoid the temptation to be all-inclusive, and adopt a 'mid-range' focus that allows for more clarity and precision. This is a point reinforced by Kasl (1983) who suggests that the more

focused the research the less reliant we need to be on the 'troublesome concept of stress'.

Yet clarifying what we mean by stress is important because the definition influences how we research stress and explain our results. The choice of a particular definition has typically been determined by the research question addressed (Parker and DeCotiis, 1983). Thus stress continues to be defined as a stimulus, response or as a result of some imbalance or interaction between the individual and aspects of the environment (McGrath, 1970; Cox, 1978). The different uses of the term have been important in establishing a state of knowledge about the various components of the stress process, but their somewhat artificial separation has not facilitated an understanding of the transactional nature of stress or the mediating psychological processes through which the transaction takes place (Dewe, 1992: 96).

This is not to say that the transactional processes has gone unrecognized or that its explanatory potential remains untested. Rather it is more the case that stress definitions traditionally direct attention towards external events and away from those processes within the individual through which such events are evaluated (Duckworth, 1986). At the empirical level, then, work-stress research continues to be influenced by definitions that focus on and somewhat artificially separate the different components of the stress process. At the conceptual level there is a growing acceptance that work stress should be viewed as relational in nature (Lazarus and Launier, 1978), involving some sort of transaction between the individual and the environment. Stress therefore arises from the appraisal that particular demands are about to tax individual resources for dealing with them, thus threatening well-being (Holroyd and Lazarus, 1982). Defining stress in this way draws attention to the process of appraisal and coping, links the individual and the environment and provides a common pathway for research which so far has proved elusive in work-stress research.

Finally, having to define stress should not become some 'rite of passage' that all work-stress researchers should pass through. Rather it should be viewed not so much as a serious attempt to affirm a belief in the reality of stress but more as a mechanism for confronting the all-important question of why we believe in the current representation of stress (Newton, 1995: 10). The issue, as Newton points out, is to consider whether what is being defined is a reflection of stress discourse rather than the experience of stress itself (1995: 10). This of course is not just an issue of definition: it is also one of methodology. Our reliance on quantitative methodology has also limited theoretical developments, leaving some authors to conclude that any meaningful progress towards a better understanding of stress will come only when we change how we define stress and the methodologies we use to investigate it (Brief and Atieh, 1987). These concerns have led to the belief that current research methods have assumed such an identity and power that they are now somewhat divorced from the phenomena they are purporting to investigate, leading to a need to question the structured reality imposed by such approaches.

There is a dualism in organizational research such that a distinction can be made between two quite different approaches to organizational analysis. The traditional and more generally accepted approach is to emphasize concrete reality through observable and measurable social facts, actions and outcomes (Pfeffer, 1990; Staw, 1990). The other approach draws attention to meaning. What distinguishes this approach from the more traditional one is its emphasis on the social construction of reality; shared meanings and beliefs that interpret, legitimate and justify organizational actions. This is what Staw refers to as a distinction between rationality and justification or, as Morley and Luthans (1984) suggest, the difference between an outsider's and an insider's view of organizational behaviour. Why is all this important? Because it draws attention to two important issues. The first requires researchers to contemplate what it is that is being measured when we measure stress. The second is to consider how we should go about it (Morley and Luthans, 1984). Both require asking 'where are current methodologies taking us?' and 'what can alternative methodologies provide?' (Van Maanen, 1979). If we are to consider whose reality it is when we are defining and measuring stress then the challenge is, as Newton (1995) suggests, to think beyond current representations of stress and move towards a language of stress that is less individualistic and more concerned with the wider social and power relations of the workplace that reflect and shape individual stressful experiences.

Defining coping

As with stress, coping has been defined in a number of different ways. These include coping as a psychoanalytical process, as a personal trait or style, as a description of specific strategies, as a process and as a taxonomy of strategies (Dewe, Cox and Ferguson, 1993). From the debate surrounding the various approaches, the theme that emerges, at least in a work setting, is that coping is part of the transaction between the person and the environment where that transaction is appraised as stressful (Latack and Havlovic, 1992). The use of a transactional framework as the context for defining coping is usually taken to reinforce the importance of coping as a major factor in the appraisal process. Within this context coping should he seen as: (a) relational in that it reflects the relationship between the individual and the environment (Folkman, 1982); (b) a dynamic process in contrast to the more traditional trait-oriented approaches (Cox, 1987; Edwards, 1988; Folkman *et al.*, 1986) and (c) integrative in that it links the other components of the stress process (Cox and Ferguson, 1991; Schuler, 1984).

A broad integrative approach is usually called for when defining coping (Latack and Havlovic, 1992). This has, particularly in a work setting, a number of advantages. These include:

- (a) recognizing that the targets towards which coping is directed can be emotional (internal) as well as situational (external), including identifying those aspects that individuals find taxing (Latack and Havlovic, 1992);
- acknowledging that the meaning individuals give to events (primary appraisal) includes not just threat and harm/loss but challenge and benefit as well (Cox and Ferguson, 1991);
- focusing researchers towards not just asking 'How much stress is there?' to 'Why is stress a problem?' (Newton, 1989) or 'What is it about work that may stimulate stress and coping processes?' (Brief and George, 1991);
- directing attention towards coping actions and behaviours, allowing coping strategies to be considered independently of their effectiveness, reducing the temptation to declare one strategy more effective than another and providing a more robust set of measures through which effectiveness can be judged (Dewe and Guest, 1990; Latack and Havlovic, 1992).

Consistent with these ideas, coping can be defined as 'cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, reduce or tolerate those demands from transactions that tax or exceed a person's resources.' Because the focus in this chapter is on work stress, the transactions referred to are work or work-related encounters that tax individual resources and abilities. Because coping efforts are constantly changing it should not be assumed from this definition that coping is 'typically placed' between the encounter and some outcome (Dewe, Cox and Ferguson, 1993) in a simple linear fashion. This is not the intention here. Coping involves a complex process of thoughts and actions and in view of the transactional nature of any encounter this complexity should be recognized. It is these dynamics that the definitional process is trying to describe.

Three important ideas are reflected in transactional definitions of stress. Building on the work of others these have been identified (Dewe, Cox and Ferguson, 1993: 6) as: (a) stress is a dynamic cognitive state, (b) representing an imbalance and (c) requiring some restoration or resolution of that imbalance. Within this framework stress does not reside solely in the individual or in the environment but in the relationship between the two. The process that links the individual and the environment involves two important appraisals. The first (primary appraisal) gives meaning to any encounter. It is in essence where the individual makes a judgement that 'something is at stake' (Folkman, 1982). For the individual it is the process through which the importance of a particular encounter is evaluated and its relevance to well-being assessed (Cox, 1987). The second (secondary appraisal) refers to 'what can be done?' (Folkman, 1982). It is where the individual evaluates how much control they have over the situation and what resources are available to them.

These two processes are highly interdependent and shape an encounter (Folkman, 1982). Identifying these two processes shifts the focus of work stress to exploring and investigating what people actually think and do in a

stressful situation (Holroyd and Lazarus, 1982) and away from arbitrarily separating the different components of that process. If the future direction of work-related stress research is, as a number of authors point out (Brief and Atieh, 1987; Payne, Jick and Burke, 1982; Schuler, 1985), towards a better understanding of the transaction between the individual and the environment then such processes should, at the empirical level, be explicitly recognized and investigated through systematic measurement (Dewe, 1991).

Coping with stress

The growth over the last two decades of research into coping, published in the general psychological literature, reflects the importance of coping as a moderating variable between a stressor and strain (Endler and Parker, 1990). In this field a number of researchers have attempted to identify the basic dimensions of coping (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978; Billings and Moos, 1984; Folkman and Lazarus, 1980; Endler and Parker, 1990). From these sorts of study three issues emerge as confronting researchers. They have been identified (Dewe, Cox and Ferguson, 1993: 8) as:

- establishing the appropriate methods for measuring coping strategies;
- agreeing on how coping strategies should be classified and described; and
- considering the utility of these schemata across different subject groups.

While the most common technique involves self-report measures, 'widely divergent approaches' (Endler and Parker, 1990: 844) have been used to identify and classify the different coping strategies. To some (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub, 1989) the difference in approach can be summarized in terms of theory-based development and classification versus empirically derived solutions where the strategies emerge from the statistical analysis. To others the debate extends to issues surrounding the generality that accompanies theoretically based measurement versus the specificity derived from empirical measurement (Amirkhan, 1990). Recurring psychometric difficulties (lack of theoretical support, poor replication of strategies and low reliabilities) have only added to the intensity of the debate. To some extent this has led to researchers looking for a middle ground that integrates the theoretical with the empirical approach (Amirkhan, 1990).

If there is one thing to emerge from this research then it is the use of terms like approach-avoidance (Roth and Cohen, 1986) and problem-focused/emotion-focused (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980) to describe coping strategies. Whether or not there is consensus among researchers as to the utility of these descriptions is debatable. At times the two descriptors are viewed as mirroring each other (Amirkhan, 1990). At other times avoidance, for example, is regarded as a third category to complement problem- and emotion-focused strategies (Endler and Parker, 1990). The issue is not that simple, despite the fact that the popularity of the problem-/emotion-focused distinction rests

somewhat on its relative unambiguousness (Fleishman,1984). The identification of social support as a third category has, for example, cast doubt on the adequacy of a two-dimensional view of coping strategies (Amirkhan, 1990), as has the emergence of a mixed category made up of both problem- and emotion-focused strategies (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980).

Researchers suggest that the problem-/emotion-focused distinction is no longer well supported as it stands (Cox and Ferguson, 1991) and point to the popularity of three-dimensional solutions (Moos and Billings, 1982; Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). Indeed, Cox and Ferguson go so far as to suggest that there are now, perhaps, at least two additional dimensions worth considering, one concerned with reappraisal and the other with avoidance (1991: 22). None of these distinctions may be exhaustive of coping options and may to a large extent simply reflect the difficulties mentioned above: that is the generality versus the specificity of the measures used, the stressful situations involved and the methodologies employed. Furthermore, to arrive at what Latack and Havlovic (1992: 401) describe as a level of 'comprehensiveness' when classifying coping strategies a distinction should also be made between the focus of coping (problem-emotion) and the method of coping (e.g. cognitive-behavioural).

However, it is clear that questions like 'how best should coping strategies be classified?' and 'what is the appropriate methodology?' will only be answered as improvements are made in how coping is conceptualized and, more importantly perhaps, through consistent attention to issues of measurement and methodology. In view of the importance of stress in the workplace and the fact that research into coping with stress at work is gaining momentum (Edwards, 1988) we are prompted to ask about how work-stress researchers have tackled the measurement of coping strategies and whether there is any consistency among the different approaches. Though a number of measures have been specifically designed for the workplace (e.g. Burke, 1971; Dewe and Guest, 1990; Latack, 1986; Parasuraman and Cleek, 1984), choosing from among them is difficult (Edwards and Baglioni, 1993) because of a lack of psychometric detail or attendance to broader issues of construct validity (Latack, 1986). The rest of this chapter explores the measurement of coping in a work setting and examines how work-stress researchers have dealt with issues of methodology, classification and utility.

Coping with stress at work

Reviewers have been quick to point to the growth of research into work-related stress in general and coping in particular. What is less clear is how much progress has been made. Coping reviews, perhaps as a result of the need to organize the research literature more cohesively (Edwards, 1988), perhaps in an attempt to identify common research pathways have: established evaluative frameworks for coping with work stress (Latack and Havlovic,

1992); identified difficulties when conceptualizing and measuring coping either generally (Dewe, Cox and Ferguson, 1993) or in terms of specific approaches (Oakland and Ostell, 1996) and identified a range of measurement issues that need to be resolved (Newton, 1989; O'Driscoll and Cooper, 1994; Edwards and Cooper, 1988). The major reason that emerges from these reviews in terms of our lack of progress in understanding the role of coping in the stress process centres around the problem of measurement (O'Driscoll and Cooper, 1994).

Research into coping with work stress has been described as rather disappointing (Bar-Tal and Spitzer, 1994). Despite the literature reviews, the identification of measurement issues and the explanatory potential of the transactional approach, issues still remain about how coping strategies should be measured in a work context. More precisely the question 'what is it we are trying to achieve when coping is being measured?' has still not been fully answered. This review sets out to examine the progress that has been made in coping measurement. It does this by exploring the research findings within the context of the different steps necessary to develop a measure of coping. In this way it may be possible to identify a number of alternative measurement approaches, the context within which each should best be applied and a better understanding of the inconsistencies in findings that have emerged from this sort of research.

Reviewing coping research in a work setting is not without its difficulties. Because the literature is so diverse and voluminous (Burke and Weir, 1980) criteria have to be established for any review of progress. Here as elsewhere (Dewe, Cox and Ferguson, 1993) these criteria involved limiting examination in general to the academic literature, and identifying articles where necessary on a citational basis and selecting those that, in general, were measurement-oriented and directed towards identifying strategies used by individuals to cope with work stress. In reality this meant carrying out a search using both of the search engines ABI/Inform and Psychological Literature. In both cases the key words *work*, *stress* and *coping* were used. It was possible from a pool of 391 articles to identify forty-five that fell within the criteria.

Only a small number, however, were primarily concerned with the development of coping measures. In the main, while measurement was not the main focus of many of the studies it was an issue, and was frequently dealt with in such depth as to warrant inclusion here. This review has been limited in general to white collar employees but acknowledges the work on coping using, for example, police (Hart, Wearing and Headey, 1995), nurses (Dewe, 1987) and bus drivers (Kuhlmann, 1990). Areas such as social support, self-management (e.g., relaxation, meditation, exercise, etc.) organizational development and employee intervention programmes were also beyond the scope of this review. It focuses largely on measurement issues, and works through these by adopting the following strategy. The policy has been to focus on the measurement process, identifying those issues that have to be confronted when scale construction is the objective. In this way the review