

See also Anxiety, Stress, and Coping – An International Journal, Vol. 16, No. 3,
Special Issue: Examination Stress
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Foreword by Stevan E. Hobfoll

It is often the case that psychological theories are incorporated into applied areas long after they have been introduced in the psychological literature. This trickle down effect means that the applications may be valid, but have little to offer theoretically in further advancing the theories they incorporate. The current work by Buchwald is unusual in that it applies two theories that are just recently being introduced. As such, it advances both its educational objectives and the theoretical goals in a unique manner. Buchwald examines Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and the Multi-Axial Model of Coping (MAM) in a way that integrates them and applies them to the dyadic examination process. COR theory emphasizes the impact of resource gain and loss on the stress process. The MAM suggests that coping is not an individualistic act in many instances. Rather, it is a coordinated (and sometimes mis-coordinated) dance between the principle players in a relationship in which coping takes place. Both theories are contextually driven and emphasize the real things that happen to people in the challenges that face them. This is especially relevant to the educational context because examinations are not just stressful in the way they are perceived. Examinations often have enormous consequences for people's lives. A high score on a critical examination can translate into professional entry, a lifetime of good salary, and social status. A failure on a critical examination can mean an end to career aspirations and the stigma of failure. Even less critical examinations can have a major impact on people's time, missed opportunities, and self-esteem. Buchwald incorporates this educational reality in a way that allows for creative testing of theory and which helps explain the emotional difficulties and performance problems people often have on exams.

Until this time, the educational literature has focused on individual coping. This implies that the examinee is both free to act without constraints and that coping sequences follow individual actions. This means that individuals are free to cope as they choose, according to their abilities. It also implies that each step in their coping will mainly follow in consequence of their own prior actions. Instead, Buchwald illustrates how the examination is a moving target and how the examiner provides input that affects the coping flow. The dyadic case is a simple one compared to larger group interactions, but it is nonetheless much more complicated than an individualistic model that ignores the dyad. As in the work of Lyons, Mickelson, Sullivan, and Coyne (1998), stress is thus no longer sterilized of its social context. Instead, it is accepted, understood, and analyzed in full measure of its complexity. The educational literature has likewise focused on appraisal theories of stress (Lazarus & Coping, 1985). Appraisal theory has much to contribute to the stress process. Especially in the case of minor stressors, how people appraise stress has major impact on how they feel and how they perform. However, appraisal theory must also incorporate the realities that people face. COR theory does this by emphasizing the environmental occur-

rences that people face. Most major stressors are real, not imagined, commonly perceived (not individually), and involve loss and gain of important resources. In addition, since people use personal, social, and instrumental resources to counteract stressful challenges, the loss of resources makes them vulnerable in a continued manner. At each iteration of the coping process, they may find themselves with diminished resilience to combat the next challenge. Again, Buchwald applies these ideas, translates them to the examination process, and adds to theory in the wake of her findings.

Finally, but most importantly, these studies are carefully conducted, behaviorally grounded, and analyzed in a sophisticated manner. The work in its entirety constitutes a major contribution to the literature in education and psychology and places Buchwald at the cutting edge of her field.

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