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Tobias Ringeyisen¹ and Petra Buchwald²
¹University of Wuppertal, Germany
²Heinrich Heine-University Duesseldorf, Germany

Introduction

Coping with examinations has been investigated by a number of researchers, usually distinguishing problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping (Carver & Scheier, 1994; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Recent theorists suggested the dispositional use of these coping dimensions to be shaped by stable representations of the self referred to as independent and interdependent self construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). The independent self construal has been found to foster problem-focused coping while findings on the relations among interdependent self construal and coping styles have been less clear (Cross, 1995; Hsieh, 2000; Lam & Zane, 2004). Firstly, such inconsistencies may trace back to the conceptualization of coping which portrays an individualistic perspective. Academic stressors, however, mainly occur in social educational settings, and are often dealt with communally (Buchwald, 2003). Secondly, recent studies have suggested a tripartite conceptualization of self which differentiates two facets of interdependence (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). To account for these shortcomings, the current paper integrates a tripartite model of self with the multi-axial approach to coping (Hobfoll, 1998) to examine the differential relations among self construals and exam-related coping styles.