

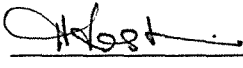
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**EFFECTIVENESS AND USE OF COPING STRATEGIES
IN THREAT AND CHALLENGE SITUATIONS**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Psychology
at Massey University

Helen Marguerite Foster
1988

Dedicated to the
memory of my father,
Gordon Lawrence Daniell
1913-1975

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the perceived effectiveness and reported use of three coping strategies in threat and challenge situations. Eighty psychology students were given false feedback following a test, in either threat or challenge conditions. Subjects were given one of three cognitive coping strategies (fatalism, perseverance, or rational action) or no strategy, prior to a second test. The results revealed fatalism to be perceived as significantly less effective than perseverance and rational action. Repeated measures of pulse rate indicated the effectiveness of the threat and challenge manipulation, but the results for appraisal revealed those in the threat condition found the situation more challenging than threatening. Subjective measures of eight emotions showed changes over time and suggested that positive affect was more evident than negative affect. It was concluded that there are differences between coping strategies and that threat and challenge can be classified either as subjective or objective variables.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.

OVERVIEW

Coping is a term well known to the lay person, but its common usage belies the facets of coping behaviour that researchers have identified. Coping is a complex concept. There are many variables involved and although there is empirical evidence for some of these, others are merely speculative. The specific links among these variables have yet to be identified adequately.

This chapter reviews the literature, focusing on the main aspects, and examines some of the discrepancies in the area. The present study attempts to investigate some of the variables that are speculative or which have inadequate empirical evidence.