

SECTION III: PSYCHOLOGY

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The Role of Appraisal and Emotion in Coping and Adaptation

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There is a puzzling bifurcation in the scientific literatures concerned with psychological stress, coping, and emotion. Robust, but largely separate, literatures have developed to focus on appraisal, stress, coping, and adaptation, on the one hand (e.g., Compas et al., 2006; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus, 1966; Lefebvre et al., 1999; Moskowitz, Hult, Bussolari, & Acree, 2009; Rasmussen, Wrosch, Scheier, & Carver, 2006; Taylor et al., 1992; Yi, Smith, & Vitaliano, 2005), and on appraisal and emotion, on the other (e.g., Frijda, 1986, 1993; Lazarus, 1968, 1991; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Roseman, 2001; Roseman & Smith, 2001; Scherer, 2001; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Although the topics touched upon in these literatures are highly overlapping, the two literatures appear to have developed largely independently, and cross-references between them are rare.

This is especially puzzling because: (1) both literatures prominently share a common theoretical framework, *appraisal theory*; (2) the same individual, Richard Lazarus, was highly influential in the development of both (e.g., Lazarus, 1966, 1968, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Smith & Lazarus, 1990); and (3) in a number of his writings, Lazarus (1990, 1993a, 1993b, 1999, 2001) strongly urged the development of a unified theoretical perspective, arguing that “emotion” and “stress” were alternative conceptualizations of the same construct, and that replacing the construct of “stress” with that of “emotion” would greatly enrich the study of coping and adaptation.

In our own work, we have contributed to the literatures on both emotion (e.g., Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith & Kirby, 2009b; Smith & Lazarus, 1990, 1993) and psychological stress and coping (e.g., Smith & Wallston, 1992, 1996; Smith, Wallston, & Dwyer, 2003; Walker, Smith, Garber, & Claar, 2005, 2007; Walker, Smith, Garber, & Van Slyke, 1997; Wright & Kirby, 2003). However, we have long subscribed to the type of unified theoretical framework that Lazarus envisioned, and we believe that such a framework provides a much more powerful perspective for studying issues of adaptation than the two seemingly separate literatures that currently exist.

In the present chapter we make the case for adopting a unified theoretical framework concerned with appraisal, emotion, coping, and adaptation. After providing an overview of psychological stress and coping

theory, we consider the appraisal theory approach to studying emotion. We discuss some of the basic theoretical assumptions underlying this approach, and then describe a set of specific appraisal models of emotion that we have helped develop and test (e.g., Smith & Kirby, 2009b; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). In doing so, we illustrate how the development of these emotion models has been heavily dependent upon stress and coping theory. We then consider how current stress and coping theory might be informed by the advances we have described within emotion theory, and conclude by briefly considering some of the key benefits we believe a unified theoretical perspective has to offer the study both of emotion and of coping and adaptation.

AN OVERVIEW OF STRESS AND COPING THEORY

STRESS

Undoubtedly, the most influential theoretical perspective concerning psychological stress and coping has been that advanced by Lazarus and colleagues (e.g., Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978). This perspective, which explicitly grew out of an effort to understand individual differences in stress and coping (cf. Lazarus, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), is inherently *relational*. A primary focus of this perspective is on the psychological stress response, and a fundamental theoretical assumption is that psychological stress is neither a simple reflection of the properties of the individual's situation or circumstances, nor a simple function of the individual's personal characteristics. Instead, psychological stress is a function of the individual's circumstances considered *in relation to* the individual's personal characteristics.

More specifically, Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 19) define psychological stress as: “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.” Central to this definition is the idea that the psychological stress response is based on an evaluation or “appraisal” by the person of what the person's circumstances imply

for his or her well-being. Thus, appraisal is a central construct in this conceptualization of stress, so much so, that the entire theoretical approach has become known as “appraisal theory.”

TYPES OF APPRAISAL

As conceptualized by Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 31): “Cognitive appraisal can be most readily understood as the process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being.” In delineating this categorization process, Lazarus (1966), Lazarus and Folkman (1984), and Lazarus and Launier (1978) identified two major classes of appraisal: *primary appraisal*, which is an evaluation of what is at stake in the encounter, or as Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 31) describe it: “Am I in trouble or being benefitted, now or in the future, and in what way?”; and *secondary appraisal*, which is an evaluation of options and resources for coping with a stressful encounter, or as Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 31) describe it: “What if anything can be done about it?”¹

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) further define three major potential outcomes of primary appraisal, which provide an initial classification of the implications for adaptation of the person's circumstances: They can be appraised as *irrelevant* to his or her personal well-being if the situation does not concern the person's needs or goals; they can be appraised as *benign/positive* if the situation is appraised as preserving or enhancing the person's well-being (or in other words, the person's needs or goals are implicated in the situation in a positive way); or they can be appraised as *stressful* if the person's needs or goals are implicated in the situation in a way that taxes or exceeds the person's resources.

The appraisal of one's circumstances as stressful is what produces a psychological stress response, which in turn mobilizes the person to respond to the stress-eliciting situation through coping. Thus, it is under conditions appraised as stressful that secondary appraisals of coping resources and options become especially relevant. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) further identify three subtypes of stressful appraisals, which provide a more fine-grained categorization of the nature of stress-eliciting

conditions: *harm/loss*, *threat*, and *challenge*. Appraisals of harm/loss reflect situations in which the person has already sustained some sort of damage, be it through injury, illness, loss of self-esteem, or some other setback to one's goals and pursuits. Both threat and challenge are more future-oriented. However, in threat, the focus is on the potential in the situation for future harm or loss, whereas in challenge, the focus is on the potential for gain or growth in the situation.

Several things should be noted about this conceptualization. First, as Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have argued, the labeling of the two major subtypes of appraisal as “primary” and “secondary” has proven troublesome because these terms are often mistakenly interpreted as implying either that these appraisals occur in a fixed sequence, with primary appraisals preceding secondary appraisals in time; or that primary appraisal is more important for understanding stress. Neither of these implications was ever intended by these labels (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Instead, primary appraisal has been considered “primary” because it is through this type of appraisal that it is determined whether one's circumstances are appraised as stressful, and thus whether secondary appraisals are relevant, as they are only relevant under stressful conditions. However, when conditions are appraised as stressful, secondary appraisals are considered to be as important to stress and coping as are primary appraisals.

Second, there are some potentially problematic ambiguities and logical inconsistencies in the above formulation. For one, the meaning of the phrase “taxing or exceeding” one's resources in the definition of psychological stress is somewhat unclear. How much of a demand must be placed on one's resources for them to be considered “taxed?” Our sense from reading the literature is that often this definition is interpreted too conservatively, such that stress is seen as arising only under rather extreme conditions in which the situational demands exceed resources. Similarly, the phrase “endangering his or her well-being” may also be overly restrictive, as this aspect of the definition would seem to preclude stress resulting from challenge appraisals in which the focus is on potential personal growth and gain. Not only is challenge-related stress important in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) own formulation, but the distinction between harm- and threat-related stress on the one hand, and challenge-related stress on the other, accords with the distinction between distress (negative stress) versus eustress (positive stress) advanced by Selye (1974) in his highly influential physiological conception of stress. Thus, a definition that seems to preclude challenge-related stress is highly troublesome. Finally, there is ambiguity as to whether the three subtypes of stress-producing appraisals—harm/loss, threat, and challenge—are defined purely by primary appraisal, or by different combinations of both primary and secondary appraisals. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) seem to imply that these subtypes of “stress” are defined solely through primary

¹ It should be noted that Lazarus and colleagues (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978) often discuss a third appraisal construct, that of *reappraisal*. It is very easy to mistakenly assume that reappraisal represents a third type of appraisal that is qualitatively distinct from either primary or secondary appraisal. It is not. Instead, the reappraisal construct was introduced to emphasize the fact that the psychological stress process unfolds over time (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978), and that as it unfolds the person repeatedly appraises his or her circumstances. As the terms of the person's relationship to his or her circumstances change, the appraisals will change, and with them the person's subjective response and coping efforts. However, as the appraisals are repeated over time, their contents are still comprised of primary and secondary appraisals.

appraisal, and they have been clearly interpreted by others as implying this (e.g., Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey, & Leitten, 1993). However this assumption causes some logical problems for the model, as will be discussed in the following text. All three of these issues will be addressed in our consideration of appraisal as it has developed in the context of emotion theory, and for now we simply want to highlight their existence.

It should also be noted that relatively little is said in this theoretical formulation about the nature of secondary appraisal, or about the person or situational factors that influence appraisal. Evaluation of one's potential control over the stressful person-environment relationship is mentioned as one important form of secondary appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 36) note that challenge as opposed to threat appraisals are especially likely when the person has a sense of personal control over the transaction.² In accord with this, ability and self-efficacy beliefs (e.g., Bandura, 1982) are cited as important antecedents of appraisal. Existential beliefs, "such as faith in God, fate, or some natural order in the Universe" (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, p. 77), have also been suggested as relevant to appraisal in that they help people to ascribe meaning to their lives. In addition, motivational commitments, which include the person's goals and values, and represent things that the person holds to be important (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), have been identified as important antecedents of primary appraisals, as they help determine what is at stake in any given encounter. On the situational side, several formal properties of events, including their novelty, predictability, uncertainty, imminence, duration, and ambiguity, have been identified as likely relevant to appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, the specific ways in which these situation factors contribute to particular appraisals have not been well characterized.

COPING

As implied by the phrase "stress and coping theory," in addition to stress and appraisal, *coping* is the third major construct in this theoretical approach. It is also the construct within this theoretical formulation that has been subject to the most theoretical development and empirical examination. As defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 141), coping consists of "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." One key aspect of this definition that Lazarus and Folkman (1984) highlight is

that coping efforts should not be confounded with the outcome or effectiveness of those efforts. This is in contrast to lay usage of the term, in which to say that someone "is coping" often implies that they are doing well in managing a difficult situation. Instead, a key theoretical assumption that Lazarus and Folkman (1984) advance is that no form of coping is inherently beneficial to adaptive outcomes. Instead, they argue that every form of coping can be effective or adaptive under certain circumstances but also can be ineffective or maladaptive under others. For instance, Lazarus (1983), has made a compelling case that denial, considered by many to be an unambiguously maladaptive form of coping, can be highly adaptive under certain circumstances (as one example, when a person is confronted with news that is simply too traumatic to be processed all at once, such as receiving a diagnosis of a terminal illness). In a similar manner, Rasmussen et al. (2006) have argued that persisting in active attempts to achieve a goal, considered by many to be the epitome of adaptive coping, can be highly maladaptive if the goal is, in fact, unobtainable. Rather than including effectiveness as part of the definition of coping, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that coping be defined as the efforts to manage stressful situations, whether or not those efforts are effective, and that part of the research agenda in studying coping is to identify and describe the conditions under which various forms of coping are adaptive versus maladaptive.

In describing coping, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Folkman and Lazarus (1980) have differentiated between two basic functions, corresponding to two different types of coping: *Problem-focused coping* refers to "the management or alteration of the person-environment relationship that is the source of stress," whereas *emotion-focused coping* refers to "the regulation of stressful emotions" that arise in response to the problem (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, p. 223).

As originally conceptualized, problem-focused coping was described as being broader than problem-solving attempts that involve acting on the situation to alter it to reduce its problematic nature. Although subsuming such problem-solving strategies, problem-focused coping was also proposed to include more intrapersonal strategies that would reduce the problem through motivational and cognitive changes, such as changing one's level of aspiration, developing new standards of behavior, reducing one's degree of investment in the situation, and the like (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotion-focused coping was described as consisting primarily of a number of cognitive processes directed at reducing emotional distress, including avoidance, minimization, reappraisal of the situation in a more positive manner without really changing it, and the like. However, it was also proposed that sometimes individuals might deliberately engage in strategies directed at *increasing* distress, such as self-blame or magnification of the problem. In making this proposal, it was noted that some individuals might seek to heighten their

² It should be noted that this assertion, that control, as a component of secondary appraisal, helps differentiate between threat and challenge appraisals, adds to the unclarity, discussed above, as to whether such challenge appraisals are conceptualized as primary appraisals or a combination of both primary and secondary appraisals.

distress to facilitate a subsequent sense of relief, whereas others might try to increase their distress to help motivate them to contend with the problem (i.e., to motivate problem-focused coping; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

This conceptualization of coping has been supplemented by alternative conceptualizations, including *active* versus *passive* coping (Brown & Nicassio, 1987), and *cognitive* versus *behavioral* coping (Jensen, Turner, Romano, & Strom, 1995), among others. One especially important alternative has been proposed by Compas and colleagues (e.g., Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001; Compas et al., 2006; Connor-Smith, Compas, Wadsworth, Thomsen, & Saltzman, 2000). In conceptualizing coping, they build on a distinction between *primary* and *secondary control* advanced by Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982). As suggested by the main title of their seminal article, "Changing the world and changing the self," Rothbaum et al. (1982) differentiate between two different ways of exerting control over one's circumstances: Primary control represents efforts to act on the situation to bring it more in line with one's wishes or desires, whereas secondary control represents efforts to alter oneself to be more in line with the demands of the situation. Compas and colleagues (e.g., Compas et al., 2001; Connor-Smith et al., 2000) use this distinction to define what they describe as two distinct modes of *engagement coping*, representing active attempts to manage the stressful situation: *Primary-control engagement coping* represents efforts to change the situation, and includes such strategies as problem solving, and, interestingly, efforts at emotion regulation; *Secondary-control engagement coping* represents efforts to change aspects of oneself to accommodate to the situation, and includes such strategies as positive thinking, cognitive restructuring, acceptance, and distraction (Compas et al., 2006). In addition, they propose a third major mode of coping, *disengagement coping*, which represents efforts to avoid or distance oneself from the source of stress, and includes such strategies as denial, avoidance, and wishful thinking (Compas et al., 2006). Walker et al. (1997) have proposed a very similar tripartite conceptualization of coping, differentiating among *active*, *passive*, and *accommodative coping*, in which active and accommodative coping correspond closely to primary- and secondary-control engagement coping, respectively, and passive coping corresponds closely to disengagement coping.

A comparison of these major conceptualizations of coping indicates considerable overlap among the constructs of problem-focused coping, active coping, and primary-control engagement coping. At the core of each of these constructs are efforts toward problem solving, in which the person attempts to act on his or her circumstances to bring them more in line with his or her goals or desires. There is far less agreement on the nature of the second major dimension of coping, with emotion-focused coping placing an emphasis on emotion-regulation efforts, and both accommodative coping and secondary-control

engagement coping emphasizing a second mode of regulating the stressful transaction itself—changing oneself to better fit the demands of the situation. Interestingly, in both conceptualizations, what one approach considers to be the second major type of coping, the other approach considers to be a facet of its first type of coping. Thus, in the conceptualization of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), accommodative strategies such as changing one's level of aspiration, or of adopting new standards of behavior, are considered to be facets of problem-focused coping, whereas in the conceptualization of Compas et al. (2001, 2006) efforts at emotion regulation are considered to be forms of primary-control engagement coping. A further difference between the two conceptualizations is that Compas et al. (2001, 2006) propose a third major type of coping, *disengagement coping*, which includes strategies such as denial and wishful thinking that Lazarus and Folkman (1984) would subsume under emotion-focused coping. Our consideration of the advantages of a unified conceptualization of emotion, stress, and coping (see below) will offer a principled means for selecting among these alternative models of coping.

The models described above attempt to differentiate coping in terms of a few broad, overarching categories that are taken to represent major coping functions (Compas et al., 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, as suggested by the foregoing discussion, each major mode of coping subsumes a number of distinct strategies a person might enact in attempting to manage a stressful situation, including planning and problem solving, use of humor, positive reinterpretation, acceptance, distraction, denial, seeking social support, quitting, and so forth. Although early research tended to examine coping in terms of the broad overarching categories (e.g., Brown, Nicassio, & Wallston, 1989; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980), there has been increasing recognition that not all the specific strategies subsumed by the same higher-order coping construct are interchangeable (e.g., Jensen, Turner, & Romano, 1992), and there has been a movement toward studying the implications for adaptation of more specific coping strategies underlying the broad strategies. Accordingly, a number of coping inventories have been developed that allow the study of these more specific coping strategies in the general context of coping with life stress (e.g., The Ways of Coping Scale [Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986], The COPE [Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989], The Responses to Stress Questionnaire [Connor-Smith et al., 2001]), and in the more specific context of coping with pain (e.g., The Chronic Pain Coping Inventory [Jensen et al., 1995], The Pain Response Inventory [Walker et al., 1997], The Vanderbilt Multidimensional Pain Coping Inventory [Smith, Wallston, Dwyer, & Dowdy, 1997]).

Research using these instruments has begun to reveal much regarding the relation of coping to adaptive outcomes, including both health outcomes and psychological adjustment. Much of this research has

focused on coping and adjustment at the dispositional level, and has revealed reliable links between chronic or habitual styles of reacting to stress in certain ways to long-term indicators of mental and physical well-being. Perhaps the clearest, most consistent finding has been that the chronic/habitual use of strategies corresponding to disengagement or passive coping is reliably associated with negative outcomes. This applies to coping both with psychosocial stressors (e.g., Yi et al., 2005) and health problems including rheumatoid arthritis (e.g., Smith et al., 2003), HIV/AIDS (e.g., Moskowitz et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 1992), and chronic pain (e.g., Compas et al., 2006; Walker et al., 2005).

Identifying strategies that are as consistently related to positive outcomes has been more difficult, and null findings involving both active or primary-control coping and accommodative or secondary-control coping have been more common than ones involving disengagement or avoidant coping (cf. Compas et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2003). Nonetheless, there are clear indications that, at least within certain contexts, both active/primary-control coping (e.g., Moskowitz et al., 2009; Yi et al., 2005) and accommodative/secondary-control coping (Compas et al., 2006; Walker et al., 2005) are associated with positive outcomes including both emotional well-being and physical health outcomes (e.g., Compas et al., 2006; Moskowitz et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2005).

These findings are characterized by a number of limitations, many of which have been discussed extensively elsewhere (Coyne & Gottlieb, 1996; Coyne & Racioppo, 2000). We would like to highlight two. First, the focus on the dispositional level, which has dominated coping research to date, necessarily obscures the potential context-sensitivity of these influences. From relatively early on in the study of coping (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Folkman et al., 1986), there have been clear indications that problem-focused, or primary-control coping strategies are more likely to be enacted in situations in which individuals believe they have some ability to alter the terms of the stressful person–environment relationship, whereas emotion-focused or secondary-control coping strategies are more likely in situations in which individuals do not feel they have this ability. These associations likely reflect context-specificity in coping effectiveness, such that the strategies are more efficacious under the conditions in which they are most likely to be enacted. Moreover, as already noted, there are clear indications that even the strategies that have been demonstrated to be highly deleterious when employed habitually can represent effective coping under certain circumscribed conditions. For instance, Lazarus (1983) has outlined a number of conditions under which denial is likely to be a highly efficacious short-term coping strategy, although these proposals still await empirical verification; and Rasmussen et al. (2006) have proposed and empirically demonstrated that disengagement from one's goals, a form of avoidant coping, can be highly adaptive when those goals prove to

be unattainable. Very clearly, it is important to take into account the context in which one is coping when examining the contributions of coping to adaptive outcomes. However, context-specificity is very difficult to examine at the purely dispositional level (but see Moskowitz et al., 2009, for an example of a meta-analysis that does so). Thus, it remains important to increase the degree to which coping is studied in a more situated, context-specific manner in which coping and outcomes associated with individual incidents are examined.

Second, the major focus of most stress and coping research conducted to date has been on the relationships between coping and adaptive outcomes such as physical health and psychological adjustment. In line with their relative theoretical neglect, alluded to above, both appraisal and its dispositional and situational antecedents have not yet been extensively examined in the context of coping. In what has been examined, the findings have been consistent with theory. For instance, both optimism (e.g., Rasmussen et al., 2006; Taylor et al., 1992) and self-efficacy (e.g., Lefebvre et al., 1999) have been implicated as important antecedents of coping that, at the dispositional level, tend to promote various forms of engagement coping, and to inhibit various forms of disengagement coping. This is consistent with theoretical propositions (e.g., Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) hypothesizing that these sorts of dispositional variables should promote appraisals of personal control, which in turn should be associated with higher levels of problem-focused coping and lower levels of emotion-focused coping. However, to our knowledge, the role of control-related appraisals mediating the relationship between these dispositional antecedents and coping behavior has not yet been explicitly examined. In addition, the range of potential dispositional and situational antecedents of appraisal and coping has not been extended much beyond these two constructs (for an exception, see Walker et al., 2005).

Notably, these two limitations to the study of stress and coping from an appraisal perspective are ones that have been firmly addressed in research directed toward developing and testing appraisal theories of emotion (e.g., Roseman, 1984, 1991; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Scherer, 1984, 1997; Smith & Lazarus, 1990, 1993). Within the appraisal approach to emotion there has been a concerted effort to describe the appraisals hypothesized to elicit different emotions in considerable detail, and then to examine the relationships between appraisal and emotion in highly situated, context-specific ways. There has been considerably less focus on how the emotions, once elicited, influence behavior, including coping activity, or on the linkages between emotions and adaptive outcomes. Thus, the development of appraisal-related stress and coping theory on the one hand, and appraisal-related emotion theory on the other, have been highly complementary. We turn now to a consideration of the appraisal approach to emotion, with an eye toward highlighting

the relevance of emerging appraisal-based emotion theories to the study of stress and coping.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE APPRAISAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF EMOTION

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As was the case with the appraisal approach to studying stress and coping, a primary motivation in developing the appraisal approach to emotion was to explain large, readily observable individual differences (Roseman & Smith, 2001; Smith, 1989). Not only do different individuals often respond to similar circumstances with different emotions, but also the same individual will often respond to the same circumstances quite differently over time. That both these types of variability can be readily documented causes grave difficulties for attempts to explain emotion through classic psychological approaches: Situationally oriented stimulus-response theories hold emotions to be systematic responses to particular situational contexts, and thus have difficulty accounting for individual differences in response to the same context; dispositionally oriented trait-based theories attribute emotional reactions to stable traits, and thus have difficulty explaining the cross-time variability that is often observed within persons. In fact, historically, the readily observed variability in emotional reactions across individuals, circumstances, and time has often led scholars to characterize emotion as chaotic, disorganized, and disorganizing (e.g., Angier, 1927; Darrow, 1935), a view that was fairly dominant within academic psychology during the first part of the 20th century (see Roseman & Smith, 2001; Smith, 1989).

Over the last half century or so (e.g., Ekman, 1984; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1968; Leeper, 1948; Tomkins, 1963), the dominant view of emotion has changed dramatically, and within academic psychology emotion is now almost universally viewed as a highly organized system that serves important motivational and adaptive functions. With this theoretical shift, efforts to explain the elicitation of emotion, and especially individual differences in this elicitation, became very important, and appraisal theories of emotion (e.g., Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Lazarus, 1990) developed to meet this need. In fact, the first appraisal theory of any kind (or, at least the first to go by that name) was proposed by Magda Arnold (1960) to explain the elicitation and differentiation of emotion. Lazarus drew upon the appraisal construct as articulated by Arnold (1960), but rather than applying the construct to emotion theory, he first further developed and modified it in formulating and testing his model of stress and coping (e.g., Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978). He subsequently reapplied his version of the appraisal construct to the study of emotion (e.g., Lazarus, 1968, 1991; Lazarus, Averill, & Opton, 1970; Lazarus, Kanner, & Folkman, 1980; Smith & Lazarus,

1990). It should be noted, however, that from the outset it is evident from a careful reading of his writings that Lazarus viewed his work on emotion and on stress and coping to be highly interrelated.

Within emotion theory, the appraisal construct proved to be very useful for explaining the antecedents of emotion, and by the mid 1980s research on appraisal theories of emotion had begun to flourish (e.g., Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; Roseman, 1984, 1991; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), with the result that appraisal theory has become the dominant perspective for understanding emotion elicitation and differentiation. Here, we would like to focus on the development and testing of two distinct types of appraisal model, both of which are designed to address a distinct set of theoretical issues: *structural models* of appraisal, which attempt to specify both the contents of appraisal and how these contents contribute to the differentiation of emotional experience (e.g., Roseman, 1984; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith & Lazarus, 1990); and *relational models* of appraisal, which attempt to specify the personal and situational antecedents of appraisal (e.g., Smith & Kirby, 2009b; Smith & Pope, 1992).

STRUCTURAL MODELS OF APPRAISAL

The first set of issues confronted by emotion-relevant appraisal theories have concerned explication of the appraisal construct. The result has been the development and testing of several structural models that, first, attempt to identify and describe precisely what it is that is evaluated in appraisal, and second, attempt to describe how the evaluations made in appraisal contribute to the differentiation of emotional experience (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2001; Scherer, 1984, 2001; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Although each of the individual models has unique properties to distinguish it from the others, in broad strokes the models have developed to become very similar to one another. In particular, they are very similar in terms of what they describe as being evaluated in appraisal, as well as how those evaluations contribute to the differentiation of emotional experience (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). Thus in describing the structural models, we focus primarily on the one proposed by Smith and Lazarus (1990), not only because it is the model with which we are most familiar and continue to work with, but also because this model grew, more directly than the others, out of the appraisal construct as developed by Lazarus and colleagues within stress and coping theory.

As such, this model shares with stress and coping theory the assumption that appraisal is inherently relational. Thus appraisals do not simply reflect either the circumstances confronting the individual or his or her characteristics, but rather they represent an evaluation of what those circumstances imply for the individual's personal well-being given his or her unique configuration of

needs, goals, values, abilities, and the like. In addition, the model uses as its starting point the constructs of primary and secondary appraisal as articulated by Lazarus and colleagues (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and described above. Specifically, the model presumes that primary appraisal reflects an evaluation of whether and how one's circumstances are relevant for personal well-being, and that secondary appraisal reflects an evaluation of one's resources and options for coping with those circumstances (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, the model has developed the appraisal construct considerably further than has been done in the context of stress and coping theory, and attempts to describe explicitly both the "questions" or issues that are evaluated in appraisal (referred to in the model as the *components* of appraisal), and how the outcomes of these evaluations, or the potential answers to the appraisal questions, map onto emotional experience. At present, the model highlights six components of appraisal, two of primary appraisal, and four of secondary appraisal.

The two components of primary appraisal are: (1) motivational relevance, an evaluation of how important the situation is to the person; and (2) motivational congruence, an appraisal of the extent to which the situation is consistent or inconsistent with one's current goals (i.e., is desirable or undesirable). The four components of secondary appraisal are: (1) self-accountability, an assessment of the degree to which oneself is responsible for the situation; (2) other-accountability, an assessment of the degree to which someone or something else is responsible; (3) problem-focused coping potential, one's perceived ability to act on the situation to increase or maintain its desirability; and (4) emotion-focused coping potential, one's perceived ability to adjust psychologically to and deal with the situation should it turn out to not be as desired.³

³ Although given the label of "emotion-focused coping potential" by Smith and Lazarus (1990) to correspond to the construct of emotion-focused coping as advanced by Lazarus and colleagues (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), this construct, as defined and operationalized by Smith and Lazarus (1990, 1993), reflecting the individual's ability to adjust to his or her circumstances should they not turn out to be desired, actually corresponds more closely to one's self-evaluated potential to engage in secondary-control engagement/accommodative coping (e.g., Compas et al., 2001; Walker et al., 1997). Consequently, this appraisal construct might be better named "accommodation-focused coping potential." We simply raise this point here, but will return to it when we consider the implications of this structural appraisal model for the conceptualization of both stress and coping toward the end of the chapter.

In addition it should be noted that there is actually a fifth component of secondary appraisal, future expectancy, that is included in the model, which reflects an appraisal of whether and to what degree one's circumstances might improve for any reason. Across a broad array of circumstances, this appraisal tends to be highly correlated with appraisals of both problem- and emotion-focused coping potential (Smallheer et al., 2007). There may well be a range of circumstances (e.g., in contending with a terminal illness), associated with appraisals of low problem- and emotion-focused coping potential, in which appraisals of positive future expectancy might be important in sustaining hope, but an extended treatment of these possibilities is beyond the scope of the present contribution.

Table 15.1 illustrates both how the outcomes of appraisals in terms of these components map onto the experience of different emotions (as proposed by Smith, 1991; Smith & Lazarus, 1990), and how they map onto the major appraisal outcomes (i.e., benefits, harms, threats, and challenges) as described by Lazarus and colleagues within stress and coping theory (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Considered by themselves, the two components of primary appraisal are sufficient to define one's circumstances as "irrelevant" to personal well-being, as "benefit" (or benign/positive), or as "stressful."

One's circumstances are appraised as "irrelevant" to personal well-being if motivational relevance is appraised as low. Very little emotion is hypothesized to be elicited under such circumstances—perhaps some level of contentment, if the circumstances tend toward being desirable, or some level of boredom, if they tend toward being undesirable. Emotional intensity is limited in this manner because when motivational relevance is appraised as low, appraisals of motivational congruence are assumed to be highly constrained, such that appraisals of desirability or undesirability will be very mild. This reflects an observation, first made by Ellsworth and Smith (1988), and recently more thoroughly scrutinized by Smallheer, Kirby, and Smith (2007), that component appraisals are not made in isolation, but rather, they can constrain one another. In the present case, it is proposed that appraisals of low motivational relevance are associated with appraisals of neutral or mild motivational congruence, and appraisals of high motivational relevance, which occur in circumstances that the person perceives to be important, accompany appraisals of either high or low motivational congruence, that is, one's circumstances are perceived to be either highly desirable or highly undesirable. A second constraint reflected in the table is the assumption that appraisals of high motivational congruence (that one's circumstances are highly desirable) implies appraisals of neutral to high coping potential for the components of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping potential. The assumption here is that low coping potential (i.e., that one either cannot affect or cannot adjust to one's circumstances) is inherently undesirable (cf. Smallheer et al., 2007).

Appraisals of high motivational relevance in combination with high motivational congruence (i.e., as important and desirable) are sufficient to define one's circumstances as benign/positive, or beneficial, whereas combined appraisals of high motivational relevance and low motivational congruence (i.e., as important and undesirable) are sufficient to define one's circumstances as "stressful." However, in neither case are these appraisals, taken by themselves, sufficient to fully determine which specific emotions will be elicited.

Under circumstances appraised as beneficial, the combination of high motivational relevance with high motivational congruence appears to be sufficient to elicit feelings of happiness (Smith, 1991; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Moreover, it follows from the constraints discussed above (i.e., those associated with appraisals of high motivational congruence), that in these circumstances appraisals of

Table 15.1 ■ Relating Stress-Related Appraisals to Emotions

		Low Motivational Relevance		High Motivational Relevance		
Motivational Congruence	Problem-focused Coping Potential	Congruent	Incongruent	Congruent	Incongruent (“Stress”)	
		(Assumed to not be low)	(Assumed to not be low)	(Assumed to not be low)	High	Low
“Irrelevant”		“Benefit”	“Opportunity”	“Harm”		
Contentment		Boredom	Happiness/joy	Challenge/ determination	Sadness	
Accountability	Self	Undefined	Undefined	Pride	Undefined	Shame/guilt/ embarrassment
	Other			Gratitude		Anger
Emotion-focused Coping Potential	High	Contentment	Boredom	Same emotions as above	Same emotions as above	
	Low	(assumed to not be low)	(assumed to not be low)	(assumed to not be low)	Fear/Anxiety	
				“Threat”		

both problem- and emotion-focused coping potential will be neutral to high, and therefore will not contribute appreciably to the differentiation of benefit-related emotions. However, appraisals of self- and other-accountability are hypothesized to further differentiate benefit-related emotional experiences, because they give direction to and a target for one's coping activities by identifying who or what is responsible for the initiating circumstances. Specifically, appraisals of self-accountability are hypothesized to elicit feelings of pride, whereas appraisals of other-accountability are hypothesized to elicit feelings of gratitude.

As indicated in Table 15.1, a broad range of emotions can be elicited when one's circumstances are appraised as "stressful" (i.e., important, but in some way not as desired). However, the primary appraisals of motivational relevance and motivational incongruence are inadequate by themselves to determine which emotion(s) will be experienced. Instead, under conditions appraised as "stressful," secondary appraisals always need to be combined with the primary appraisals to provide emotion-differentiation. It is this observation that provides the impetus for Lazarus' (e.g., 1990, 1993b, 1999) frequent argument that emotion is a richer, more differentiated construct than stress, and should therefore supplant stress in stress and coping theory. As with the benefit-related emotions, appraisals of accountability provide some of this differentiation, with appraisals of other-accountability combining with the stressful primary appraisals to elicit anger, and appraisals of self-accountability combining with them to elicit a range of self-directed negative emotions, including shame, guilt, and embarrassment.⁴

⁴At present, the appraisal model as articulated by Smith and Lazarus (1990) does not provide an appraisal mechanism for differentiating among these self-directed emotions (i.e., to determine whether one will experience shame vs guilt vs embarrassment). This represents a clear indication that although this structural appraisal model has developed considerably beyond the appraisal models represented in stress and coping theory, it remains to be fully explicated.

However, unlike benefit-related emotions, in which appraisals of coping potential do not appear to contribute much to emotion-differentiation, appraisals of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping potential are very important contributors to emotion-differentiation under stressful circumstances. First, appraisals of high problem-focused coping potential combine with the primary appraisals of "stress" to define one's circumstances as a "challenge" (indicating that the person has the potential to change the circumstances to bring them more in line with his or her desires), which elicits feelings of challenge/determination that motivate the individual to stay engaged in the situation and work to make it more desirable (Smith, 1991; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). In contrast, appraisals of low problem-focused coping potential combine with the primary appraisals of "stress" to define one's circumstances as a "harm" (indicating that the person is in a bad situation about which he or she can do little to make it better), which elicits feelings of sadness and/or resignation that motivate the individual to seek help and possibly to disengage from the harmful situation, permitting reengagement elsewhere (Rasmussen et al., 2006; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Appraisals of high emotion-focused coping potential (the evaluation that one will be able to adjust to circumstances should they not work out as desired) have seldom been explicitly discussed in the context of this appraisal model, but they likely serve to allow one to remain relatively calm in the face of the conditions appraised as stressful. In contrast, appraisals of low emotion-focused coping potential (the evaluation that one will not be able to adjust to the circumstances and/or handle them should they not work out as desired) combines with the stress-evoking primary appraisals to define the circumstances as a threat, which elicits feelings of anxiety that motivate the person to be vigilant and to use caution in an attempt to avoid undesired outcomes (Smith & Lazarus, 1990).

To date there has been considerable effort devoted to testing the predictions made by this and the other

structural appraisal models cited above. The results of this work provide considerable evidence in support of the specific models tested, and strongly support the general proposition that the experience of particular emotions is systematically related to specific appraisals (e.g., Frijda et al., 1989; Kuppens, Van Mechelen, Smits, & De Boek, 2003; Roseman, 1991; Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990; Scherer, 1997; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith & Lazarus, 1993; Tong et al., 2007). Thus, these structural models provide a useful theoretical lens for understanding the elicitation of differentiated emotional experience.

RELATIONAL MODELS OF APPRAISAL

The development and testing of the structural appraisal models, as described above, represent clear advances both in the development of emotion theory, and in the development of the appraisal construct more generally. However, taken by themselves, the structural models do not yet deliver on one of the key goals of appraisal theory both with regard to stress and coping, and emotion—namely to account systematically for individual differences in appraisal that then can account for individual differences in emotion and coping. This is because the structural appraisal models typically begin with the individual appraising his or her circumstances a particular way, and then examine the emotional consequences of those appraisals. These models, taken by themselves, do not attempt to address the situation and/or person factors that gave rise to the appraisals.

To address this limitation, work on the structural appraisal models has been supplemented by work on a second class of appraisal model, *relational models of appraisal*, that was developed precisely to describe the situational and dispositional factors that contribute to appraisal as well as how these factors are combined to yield particular emotion-eliciting appraisals (e.g., Griner & Smith, 2000; Smith & Kirby, 2009a; Smith & Pope, 1992; reviewed in Smith & Kirby, 2009b). The promise of this approach is that when the relational models are sufficiently developed, one ought to be able to predict systematically how an individual with a particular configuration of personal characteristics will be likely to appraise, and hence respond emotionally, to a given situation with a particular configuration of appraisal-relevant properties. The approach taken to develop these models has been to consider each of the appraisal components proposed in the structural model of Smith and Lazarus (1990) individually, and for each to identify the relevant properties of the person and the situation that are considered in the appraisal, and describe how those properties are combined to determine particular outcomes. These models have largely been developed through a logical analysis of what an “appraiser” would need to know about the person and his or her circumstances, to evaluate the appraisal question represented by the particular appraisal component (e.g., Smith & Pope, 1992). To date, specific models have been

proposed (Smith & Pope, 1992) and empirically supported for two of the appraisal components, motivational relevance (e.g., Griner & Smith, 2000; Smith & Pope, 1992), and problem-focused coping potential (Smith & Kirby, 2009a; Smith & Pope, 1992). Relational models for the remaining appraisal components await development.

For motivational relevance, the key question to be evaluated is “How important to me is what is happening (or what might happen) in this situation?” As discussed by Smith and Pope (1992), this question is inherently relational. To answer it one needs to refer both to one’s own goals and to the implications of the situation for those goals. A situation could have implications for many things but would not be appraised as motivationally relevant if the person did not care about those things. Conversely, a person could be passionately committed to a particular issue but would appraise little motivational relevance if the circumstances were seen as unrelated to that issue. Thus, it is hypothesized that motivational relevance will be appraised as high, resulting in relatively intense emotions, to the extent to which an individual cares about a particular goal or issue and his or her circumstances are perceived as having implications for that goal or issue. Motivational relevance should be appraised as relatively low to the extent that either condition does not apply. These propositions have generally been supported in a series of studies in which individuals’ goals and concerns have been assessed as their degree of commitment to affiliative versus achievement issues and then their appraisals and emotions in response to situations in which relevance to achievement and affiliative concerns was either manipulated or controlled. In the main, one’s degree of commitment to achievement concerns predicted how motivationally relevant one would appraise situations having high achievement relevance, but not how motivationally relevant one would appraise situations having high affiliative relevance, and vice-versa (e.g., Smith & Pope, 1992). As one concrete example, Griner and Smith (2000) assessed appraisals and emotion in individuals who had been preselected to be relatively high or low in their degree of orientation to affiliative concerns while they waited to interact with another individual on a teaching task (a situation with potential relevance to both achievement and affiliative concerns). It was observed that, relative to individuals who were low on affiliative orientation, individuals selected to be high on this orientation were likely to interpret the upcoming situation as having higher affiliative relevance, and associated with this perception, to appraise the motivational relevance of the situation to be higher, and to report higher levels of interest and lower levels of boredom.

For appraisals of problem-focused coping potential, the key question to be assessed is: “Can I successfully do something that will make (or keep) this situation (more) the way I want it to be?” As discussed by Smith and Pope (1992), who based their analysis, in part, on the seminal work of Heider (1958), appraisals of this component would seem to require consideration not only of the

perceived difficulty of the “task” at hand (i.e., whatever might need to be done to make one’s circumstances more desirable), but also of how this difficulty relates to one’s perceived abilities. Specifically, to the extent to which the task demands are perceived as exceeding one’s abilities, appraised problem-focused coping potential should be low, but to the extent to which they are perceived as being within one’s abilities, appraised problem-focused coping potential should be high. This hypothesis has been largely validated in a sequence of studies in which participants selected to be high or low in both actual and self-perceived math ability confronted either easy or difficult math word problems (Smith & Kirby, 2009a; Smith & Pope, 1992). For instance, Smith and Kirby (2009a) found that when confronting an easy problem, one’s self-perceived and actual abilities were largely unrelated to one’s appraisals of problem-focused coping potential and its related emotions of challenge/determination and resignation, but that in response to an extremely difficult problem, at all but the highest levels of combined self-perceived and actual ability, appraisals of problem-focused coping potential increased as a function of both increasing actual ability (as assessed by the Math SAT) and self-reported ability. In addition, increasing levels of appraised problem-focused coping potential were associated with increased levels of challenge/determination and decreased levels of resignation in response to the difficult problem. That the appraisals and emotions of the highest ability group did not conform to these predictions suggests that the model advanced by Smith and Pope (1992) may be somewhat oversimplified (see Smith & Kirby, 2009a), but in the main the general hypotheses were supported.

For the present purposes, the key thing to note about these relational models is that within the domain of emotion, efforts are underway to develop and extend appraisal models so that they can begin to deliver meaningfully on the promise of being able to account systematically for individual differences in emotion, and by extension, coping.

TOWARD AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE ON APPRAISAL, EMOTION, AND COPING

In reviewing side by side the separate literatures on appraisal, stress, and coping, and on appraisal and emotion, we hope that we have rather forcefully illustrated that, although the two literatures often appear to be largely independent, the study of appraisal, stress and coping, on the one hand, and of appraisal and emotion, on the other, are highly interdependent. In large part, through the influences of Lazarus and his colleagues, the two lines of study have always informed one another. This is especially evident when the development of the appraisal construct is considered. The original appraisal construct that Lazarus developed and applied to the

study of stress and coping (e.g., Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), was borrowed from the work of Arnold (1960) in the study of emotion. Conversely, as partially illustrated in Table 15.1, the development of structural and relational models of appraisal within emotion theory (e.g., Smith & Kirby, 2009b; Smith & Lazarus, 1990) was informed by, is consistent with, and in many ways serves as an extension of the development of the appraisal construct within stress and coping theory. As can be seen in the table, it is not at all difficult to map the components of appraisal proposed by Smith and Lazarus (1990) and others to be important for understanding emotion elicitation and differentiation onto the appraisal-related constructs highlighted by Lazarus and colleagues (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) in the study of stress and coping.

Although the appraisal construct has of late been somewhat neglected in the study of stress and coping, as much of the theoretical work has been directed at the conceptualization of coping within this framework, the development of the appraisal construct has flourished in the study of emotion, making the study of emotion quite complementary to the study of stress. In fact, we believe that the appraisal construct within emotion theory has matured to a point where a careful consideration of this construct as it is represented in emotion theory could help advance the study of stress and coping. In this final part of this chapter, we would like to consider a couple of specific instances where we believe this to be the case.

First, we believe that Table 15.1 vividly illustrates Lazarus’ (1990, 1993b, 1999) claim that stress and emotion are closely related constructs, and in fact, can be considered opposite sides of the same coin, but that of the two, emotion is the broader, richer, and more informative construct. As the table illustrates, stress-related emotions are a subset of all emotions. There are a range of emotional states, most notably benefit-related emotions, such as happiness, pride, and gratitude, which fall outside of the domain of stress. At the same time, there is a very broad range of stress-related emotions, corresponding to challenges (e.g., challenge/determination), threats (e.g., anxiety), and harms (e.g., sadness, anger, and guilt), that are each characterized by their own distinctive eliciting appraisals, and that differ greatly in their motivational properties (e.g., challenge/determination motivates one to persevere on a difficult task, whereas sadness/resignation motivates one to disengage from it; Smith & Kirby, 2009a; Smith & Lazarus, 1990). Thus, as Lazarus (1990, 1999) and Smith and Lazarus (1990) have repeatedly argued, knowing a person’s emotional state conveys much more information about how that person is appraising his or her circumstances and how he or she is likely to behave than does merely know that he or she is experiencing stress.

In addition, examination of this table clarifies an ambiguity in the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) formulation of stress that we identified in our review. We noted that it was unclear whether the major subtypes of stress identified by Lazarus and Folkman—challenges, threats,

and harms, were solely defined by primary appraisals, as Lazarus and Folkman seemed to imply in a number of places, or whether these subtypes of stress required a joint consideration of both primary and secondary appraisal. As indicated in the Table 15.1, just as the differentiation of stress-related emotions requires a joint consideration of both primary and secondary appraisal, the major subtypes of stress described by Lazarus and Folkman are clearly defined by the joint consideration of both primary and secondary appraisals. All three subtypes of stress are characterized by the *same* combination of primary appraisals—high motivational relevance and low motivational congruence. It is consideration of secondary appraisal components that differentiate the subtypes. Thus, challenges are further associated with appraisals of high problem-focused coping potential; in contrast, harms are further associated with appraisals of low problem-focused coping potential, and threats are further associated with appraisals of low emotion-focused coping potential. Therefore, just as the differentiation of stress-related emotions is heavily dependent upon secondary appraisal, so too are the definitions of the major subtypes of psychological stress.

At perhaps an even more fundamental theoretical level, we believe that a careful consideration of appraisal as it has developed in the study of emotion helps to address some difficult issues in the definition of stress and coping. In particular, in our review of stress and coping theory we noted some ambiguities in the very definition of stress, as well as considerable disagreement as to how to best conceptualize the major types of coping. With regard to the definition of stress, we noted that there are problems associated with defining stress as being based on appraisals that the situation “taxes or exceeds one’s resources” due to ambiguities as to what that phrase means, and that further defining stress in terms of appraisals that the situation is “endangering” the person’s well-being is too restrictive in that it seems to exclude challenges, identified by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as an important subtype of stress, from the stress category. We believe that a careful consideration of the

components of primary appraisal as represented by the model proposed by Smith and Lazarus (1990), and depicted in Table 15.1, offers a cleaner, less problematic definition of stress than that originally offered by Lazarus and Folkman (1980), and that this definition further provides a basis for selecting among the current alternative conceptualizations of the major types of coping.

As depicted in Table 15.1, stress is defined by the combined appraisals of high motivational relevance and of motivational incongruence or, in other words, it occurs when the person appraises his or her circumstances as important, but in some way not as desired. The motivational incongruence, itself, can be conceptualized as a discrepancy, or gap, between what one *wants* in the given situation (referred to by Roseman, 1984, in his appraisal model, as one’s “motivational state”), and what the person *has* in the situation (referred to by Roseman, 1984, as one’s “situational state”). Thus, in this view, psychological stress is defined as a subjectively important discrepancy, or gap, between what one wants and what one has in a given situation, and the strength of the subjective stress is hypothesized to be a function of the magnitude of the discrepancy. These intuitions are captured in Figure 15.1. This alternative conceptualization of stress seems cleaner than the original, as there is no need to appeal to the demands of the situation taxing or exceeding one’s abilities, nor is there a need to require that the circumstances necessarily endanger the person’s well-being.

Moreover, this alternative conceptualization of stress appears to provide a theoretical basis for selecting among the alternative conceptualizations of coping that were reviewed above. If psychological stress is defined as the magnitude of the discrepancy between one’s motivational state and one’s situational state, then coping can be defined as one’s efforts to reduce the magnitude of this discrepancy. As Figure 15.1 illustrates, there are two basic routes for reducing the discrepancy. First, one can act on the circumstances to change them to bring them more in line with one’s desires. This clearly corresponds to problem-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) or primary-control engagement coping (Compas

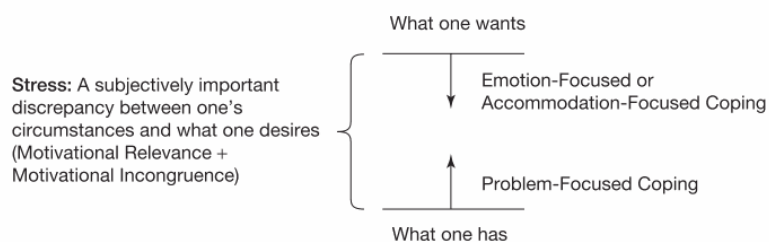


Figure 15.1 ■ Our theoretical conceptualization defines subjective stress as a perceived discrepancy between what one has in a given situation and what one wants in that situation. This gap is defined by the combined primary appraisals of high motivational relevance (importance) and high motivational incongruence (undesirability). Two major forms of coping are indicated as different routes to reducing the discrepancy, and hence, to reducing subjective stress: Problem-focused coping, which reflects efforts to change the situation to bring it more in line with what one wants; and emotion-focused or accommodative coping, which reflects efforts to alter one’s goals and desires to bring them more in line with what one has.

et al., 2001), as depicted in the major conceptualizations of stress. Second, one can act on one's desires or beliefs in such a way that the circumstances are made more desirable without actually changing them. This can be accomplished through such strategies as reprioritizing one's goals (e.g., Rasmussen et al., 2006), appraising one's circumstances in a more positive light, reinterpreting the relevance of the circumstances to one's goals, and the like. These strategies are much more akin to secondary-control engagement coping as described by Compas et al. (2001) and accommodative coping as described by Walker et al. (1997) than they are to emotion-focused coping as described by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Thus, if the emotion-based appraisal model of Smith and Lazarus (1990) is applied to stress and coping theory, an implication is that the second major mode of coping included in most theories might better be conceptualized as accommodative coping/secondary-control engagement coping than as emotion-focused coping. Further highlighting the interdependence between stress and coping theory and emotion theory, acceptance of this conclusion would imply that the appraisal component referred to as emotion-focused coping potential in the model of Smith and Lazarus (1990) might better be called something along the lines of accommodation-focused coping potential.

As we hope we have illustrated through this review and analysis, we believe there is much to be gained by adopting a combined theoretical perspective that integrates stress and coping theory with emotion theory. Even while evolving as seemingly independent literatures, both fields of study have benefitted, especially in the development of the appraisal construct, through the mutual influence of each field on the other. We believe that the mutual benefit would only be heightened if an integrated theoretical perspective were adopted. As Lazarus (1990, 1993b, 1999) has argued, and we have attempted to illustrate, a consideration of emotion enriches and clarifies the construct of stress, and helps to clarify the construct of coping. On the other side, much of the study of emotion within appraisal theory has been focused on describing the antecedents of emotion, and relatively little attention has been devoted to documenting the motivational effects of emotion on behavior and adaptation. We believe that the advances in stress and coping theory in conceptualizing coping and in relating it to adaptation and adjustment would prove very useful to emotion theorists as they attempt to map out the motivational and behavioral effects of various emotions. Our hope is that this review, by indicating the promise of adopting a combined theoretical perspective, will make the actual adoption of such a perspective more likely.

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