

WAYS OF COPING AND COGNITIVE STYLE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Past research on the psychological coping process has been undertaken from a variety of perspectives, leading to a proliferation of information about coping behavior but with little integration of this knowledge. The goal of the present study is to bring together various lines of research in order to develop a broader understanding of the coping process.

Robert White (1974) brings to the discipline the long needed attempt at a systematic description of the field itself. White proposes that adaptation is the central concept. Various strategies of adaptation, from dealing with minor everyday encountered problems to dealing with severe traumas such as the death of loved ones and divorce, are accounted for in this framework. Coping is defined within this framework as a form of adaptation under relatively difficult conditions. For example, it consists of all those activities in which the individual engages in order to get through the stress and anxiety which results after the termination of a long-standing relationship. Likewise, it refers to ways in which the incoming college freshman deals with being away from home and being in the adult world.

In short, coping refers to the process whereby the individual adjusts to changes or deals with problems or stressors at either a conscious or an unconscious level. This process includes many

techniques, for instance, avoiding and distorting threatening stimuli, making changes in oneself, or making changes in the environment. Those techniques are necessary to maintain effective functioning.

Lazarus, Averil, and Opton (1974) propose that there is a mediating cognitive process of appraisal in which the individual surveys the environment to determine the cause and extent of the threatening situation before engaging a coping technique. The coping process in this respect is used to protect the individual from this threat as much as possible. Through a continuous series of appraisals and reappraisals, decisions are made as to the various coping alternatives to use suitable to the time and situation. These decisions take place either in a direct action mode or an intrapsychic one.

Lazarus considers the direct action mode to operate at a conscious level. The person is actively aware of having chosen to deal with the situation in a particular fashion. Coping alternatives such as learning a new skill, changing one's own behavior, or consulting with an expert are examples of direct action mode alternatives.

The intrapsychic mode operates at an unconscious level. The individual is not aware of dealing with the problem in this way. Repression, denial, and intellectualization are examples of this mode.

In White's (1974) general scheme of coping, adaptation is the superordinate construct and all "ways of coping" are subordinate in that they all accomplish the same goal of adaptation. Lazarus coined the phrase "ways of coping" as an inclusive concept which accommodates other terms such as coping strategies, coping mechanisms, coping styles, and defense mechanisms. Because of the simplistic and pragmatic value of



"ways of coping" as a descriptor the present study adopts this system to refer to diverse measures of coping behavior and styles.

The model proposed here consolidates various "ways of coping" into a family of coping techniques. A discussion of the relationships between levels of concepts is necessary to understand this family. At a fundamental level are generalized coping styles, such as the tendency to use active or intrapsychic modes; these may be considered as deep-rooted psychologically, having a characterological nature. At a higher level are specialized techniques, that is, specific behaviors used to deal with stressors. An example is the initiation of a muscle relaxation technique when a stressful situation is encountered.

The difference between the generalized and specialized elements of the "ways of coping" family is that the former refer to an overall lifestyle and the latter a response to a specific situation. All individuals employ a variety of coping techniques which become hierarchically organized and give rise to each person's unique coping style.

It is proposed that through the mediating process of appraisal and reappraisal the individual selects from his or her repertoire "ways of coping" that which will best meet the needs of the particular situation. This selection process is a function of the individual's perception of available alternatives which is, in turn, dependent on a variety of factors. One major factor suggested by the research of Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough, and Karp (1962) is cognitive style.

Cognitive style is the characteristic, self-consistent mode of functioning in which the individual exhibits all of his or her perceptual and intellectual activities. Cognitive style cuts across

diverse psychological areas, and exists, therefore at an even more fundamental level than coping style.

Witkin and his associates have proposed that cognitive style can be defined along a dimension of field-dependence/field-independence which they term psychological differentiation. Another way of viewing psychological differentiation is complexity of functioning, whereby a person's functioning becomes increasingly specialized as he or she develops.

As a small child the individual's mind might be described as an undifferentiated "blob" of consciousness incapable of performing many tasks because of the lack of specialization. As the child develops, distinctions can be made between such things as thoughts from feelings and what is real and what is imagined. Differentiation also involves how one sees him or herself in relation to the environment. A differentiated person separates what is considered to be self from not self.

According to Witkin et al. the functioning of the field-dependent (FD) person is dominated by the overall organization of the perceptual field. The FD person exhibits generalization rather than specialization of psychological functioning. He or she does not separate figure from ground, so that the perceptual field is seen as whole and not composed of discrete parts. The person tends to experience the world in a global fashion and to rely primarily on external referents because self and not self are not well differentiated.

On the other hand, a field-independent (FI) person is more apt to see the field as composed of discrete units. This person has the

tendency to rely primarily on internal referents because self is clearly distinguished from not self.

These two perceptual modes generalize to other areas of psychological functioning and therefore constitute a cognitive style. In the interpersonal realm for example, the FD person's global way of processing information facilitates a social orientation. He or she looks to external sources to structure the world and other people fill their informational voids. Thus, the FD person needs to keep close contact with others. Field-independent persons operate with a degree of autonomy in interpersonal relationships. They maintain internal frames of reference which they tend to impose upon situations in order to structure them. They do not respond to social cues as acutely as do FD persons, thus displaying a more unemotional response to social relationships.

It seems likely that the FD and FI types would also be predisposed to cope with anxiety provoking situations and stress in different fashions. In other words, the individual will employ "ways of coping" which are congruent with his or her mode of perceptual appraisal and preferred style of relating to the environment. The focus of the current study is to examine the relationship between cognitive style, general coping style, and utilization of specialized coping techniques.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Lazarus (1978) suggests that during the coping process the individual's cognitive appraisal is influenced by his or her's perception of the stimulus events. The stimulus events are neutral until the person perceives them to be stressful. The individual's perceptions affect the manner in which he or she copes with the stressful event. Witkin et al. (1962) make a similar argument when they propose that an individual's cognitive style influences whether he or she adopts a generalized or specialized mode of coping.

Support for this point of view comes from several studies showing that specialized "ways of coping," such as isolation and intellectualization, are related to field-independence while global ways of coping, such as denial and repression, are used by those with a field-dependent orientation. Witkin et al. (1962) found a significant correlation between a perceptual index of field-dependence and children's use of denial as a defense mechanism as revealed by the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Similarly, subjects in a clinical interview were given a rating of their tendency towards either denial or self-awareness, and these ratings were found to be positively correlated with their perceptual index scores for field-dependence.

Other studies have shown field-dependent persons to report dreams less often than field-independent people (Witkin et al., 1962). The

importance of this phenomenon lies in the commonly accepted supposition that massive repression is the cause of the inability to recall dreams.

According to Witkin et al. (1962) the channeling of the individual's impulses and the expenditure of energy are controlled by defenses which are developed in line with the psychological differentiation process. As the child grows, specialized defense systems are developed which channel impulses, protect the individual from harmful effects, and channel energy to accomplish specific goals. The internalization of values and societal morals are important to the construction of viable defense systems; however, the degree to which this takes place varies. The more internalization of societal rules by the individual, the less dependent he or she is on the environment for constant feedback and instruction. Along these same lines, Bertini (1960) hypothesized that people who used isolation as a characteristic defense mechanism would tend to perceive things in an analytical fashion. The mechanism isolation involves the capacity to separate and isolate an idea from its emotional content or to separate two ideas that belong together. Bertini felt this parallels the capacity in analytical perceiving to separate several elements from the phenomenal field, in isolating them from a context. Using a method suggested by Schafer (1954) he administered the Rorschach Test to 80 college students to assess their tendency to use isolation as a defense mechanism. In addition he assessed the subjects' capacity for analytical perception using the Gottschaldt Test, an embedded figures test. The two measures were found to be positively related. Those subjects who tended to use the defense mechanism of isolation also tended to be field-independent as shown by the embedded figures test.

In another study by Crutchfield and Starkweather (1953) it was found that field-independent persons tended to use intellectualization as a defense. Intellectualization is manifested by a general style of thinking and verbalization characterized by an extreme emphasis on objective judgement, technical knowledge, a need to view everything as an intellectual task and a preference for dealing with words and abstractions. Using a Q-sort analysis they were able to demonstrate the most field-independent persons characterized themselves as "cold and distant with others," "unaware of their social stimulus value," "concerned with philosophical problems, e.g. religion, values, the meaning of life," and also endorsed the phrases "highly cathects intellectual activity; values cognitive pursuits."

Kalis (1957) asked subjects to reproduce a periscopically viewed outline square seen in a setting of reduced constancy cues, and found that field-dependent people saw the square as closer to them and thus reproduced it larger than did field-independent people. He interpreted this to mean that field-independent people used isolation as a defense mechanism, striving to maintain distance between themselves and their environment. Similarly, Linton (1952) found field-dependent college students used denial as a defense, reporting fewer angry feelings toward their family members, fewer expressions of desire to have been born into a different family, place, or time. Moreover, field-dependent subjects more often agreed with the statement "There is hardly anything lower than a person who does not feel a great love, gratitude and respect for his parents" suggesting use of denial to deal with these aspects of their lives.

Other studies supporting this overall interpretation have also been found using the Rorschach test. Gardner, Holzman, Klein, Linton, and Spence (1959), using the Rorschach test to assess isolation and repression, found a positive relationship between use of isolation and a style of analytical cognitive control of scanning. Scanning involves making cognitive discriminations between detailed stimuli. Scanning involves attention to objects, object properties, and events. The scanner actively pursues objects about him or her and is continually searching or scanning the field. Likewise, a positive relation existed between the defense mechanism repression and the more global cognitive control of leveling. Levelers are characterized by maximal assimilation effects, and by memory organizations in which fine shades of distinctions among individual elements are lost. Luborsky, Blinder, and Schimek (1965) found isolators to have greater range of scattered eye movements while viewing TAT cards. The presence of scatter demonstrated subjects' attention to detail, indicative of a field-independent cognitive style. In an unpublished study by Luborsky, Blinder, and Schimek, reported in Schimek (1968), subjects who performed in a field-independent manner on an embedded figures test also tended to use isolation as a defense.

Of primary importance to this study is the research by Schimek (1968) who examined the relationship between field-independence, as measured by the Rod and Frame Test (RFT), and the Rorschach assessment of intellectualization. He did a longitudinal analysis of Rorschach protocols and RFT scores for subjects at the age of 10, 14, 17, and 24 and found that RFT scores as well as the Rorschach scores of R, Dd, M,

Sum C and W were correlated with an overall Rorschach rating of intellectualization.

Schimek (1968) assessed overall intellectualization along three dimensions: a) emphasis on clarity and accuracy as shown by form level responses, use of detail, and specificity or elaboration of responses; b) emphasis on productivity as shown by number of responses, variety of contents, and determinants; c) detachment from responses, as shown by style of verbalization, spontaneous comments, and explanations during the enquiry.

With the exclusion of whole (W) scores at all age groups and the number of responses (R), detail (Dd), and Sum C (color) scores at age 10, overall intellectualization ratings were significantly correlated with all Rorschach scores over all age groups. RFT scores were also significantly correlated with Rorschach scores (except for age 14) showing a consistent relationship between high intellectualization ratings and field-independence. Schimek concluded that cognitive style influences the choice of defenses, thus supporting the findings of Witkin et al. (1962) which showed individuals with a more articulated cognitive style to use more specialized and differentiated defenses.

In short, all of the previously cited research leads to the general hypothesis of the present study that an individual's cognitive style is an important factor influencing the coping process. More specifically, those individuals with a more articulated cognitive style tend to use more specialized ways of coping and those with a more global cognitive style tend to use global ways of coping, and this affects the choice of techniques employed to reduce stress and anxiety.



To test the above hypothesis coping was measured at several levels. Past studies have been limited in this respect. They have tended to concentrate on only one level of coping and theoretical orientation, with a psychoanalytical orientation being the most frequently employed. This results in an incomplete picture of how coping behaviors are actually related to cognitive differentiation. The present study attempts to address this shortcoming.

Three various levels of coping behavior are examined in this study. Fourteen "ways of coping" from across these levels are assessed. Each of these coping alternatives can be logically categorized as indicating either a global or a specialized approach. Moreover, in line with the overall hypothesis, each represents either a field-dependent or field-independent orientation.

Intellectualization as measured by the Group Rorschach, representing the first level of coping, is categorized as specialized because this style of thinking and verbalization is characterized by the great importance placed on objective judgement, technical knowledge, a need to treat everything as an intellectual task, and a preference for dealing with words and abstractions. The attention to detail characteristic of a field-independent cognitive style is hypothesized to be related to intellectualization.

The second level to be tested here may be labeled personal style. The Oklahoma Personal Style Inventory developed by Cervantes and Fromme in Cervantes (1982) measures people's ability to regulate the environment's impact on themselves, as well as their impact on the environment. This regulation enables the person to cope and adapt to internal and external stressors. The three coping processes assessed

which reflect these relatively deep-seated regulation processes are Accomodation, Assimilation, and Conservation.

The Accomodation strategy emphasizes change and fluctuation of the individual's systemic boundaries allowing the boundaries to be flexible and porous. The Accommodator relies on the environment to give him or her feedback to facilitate adaptation. This reliance on the environment suggest Accommodation to be of a field-dependent nature.

Assimilation emphasizes the modification of the environment in an effort to meet the person's internal demands and needs rather than changing self to meet environmental demands. The Assimilator style seems to have an inherent specified goal directedness about it which the other OPSI styles lack. The individual appears to manipulate the environment in a way to meet internal needs rather than responding to a flood of unknown environmental demands. The Assimilator's style fits more of a field-independent style concerning itself with the environment only to aid in the individual's adaptation.

The Conservation strategy is one which takes a closed stance toward the world. This strategy rigidifies the person's systemic boundaries so as not to be influenced or changed by potential inputs. The Conservation style tends to consist of "ways of coping" which are global, such that entire experiences are denied existence to avoid change in self. The Conservator's use of blanket defenses suggest a tendency to operate within a field-dependent cognitive style.

Finally, the study examines a third level of coping which consists of specific coping behaviors. The ten coping alternatives of the Coping Behaviors Inventory (Wong-Rieger, in press) represent either global or specific "ways of coping." Table I presents a summary classification of

all the "ways of coping" either as global or specific, and the predicted cognitive style determined by this writer, with which each is associated.

TABLE I  
WAYS OF COPING CATEGORIZED AS EITHER SPECIALIZED OR  
GLOBAL AND ASSOCIATED COGNITIVE STYLE

Way of Coping	Type of Coping Variable	Associated Type of Cognitive Style <sup>a</sup>
Intellectualization	Specialized	FI
Accommodation	Global	FD
Assimilation	Specialized	FI
Conservation	Global	FD
Ignore/Forebearance . . .	Global	FD
Talk with someone . . .	Specialized	FI
Professional help . . .	Specialized	FI
Learn skills . . .	Specialized	FI
Change own values . . .	Specialized	FI
Avoid situation	Global	FD
Change others . . .	Specialized	FI
Change situation/complain . . .	Specialized	FI
Distracting activities . . .	Global	FD
Reinterpret . . .	Specialized	FI

<sup>a</sup>FI refers to Field-Independent and FD refers to Field-Dependent

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Subjects

College students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at Oklahoma State University served as subjects. Subjects were offered extra credit points in their course for participation in the study. There were 50 females and 50 males. Subjects were assigned to one of five groups. Each of these groups was composed of 10 males and 10 females. Each group was presented with a different order of test presentation.

#### Materials

Materials consisted of the following four tests: the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT), the Group Rorschach Test, the Oklahoma Personal Style Inventory (OPSI), and the Coping Behaviors Inventory.

The GEFT was designed to be a group adaptation of the original individually administered Embedded Figures Test (EFT). The EFT is a perceptual test which assesses the individual's position on the field-dependence dimension. The subject's task is to find a previously seen simple figure within a large complex figure. The complex figure has been organized so as to obscure or inbed the looked for simple figure.

The GEFT was modeled as closely as possible to the EFT in mode of presentation and in format. It contains 18 complex figures, 17 of these

were taken from the EFT.

Color is used in the EFT to emphasize large organized Gestalten which serve to imbed the simple forms. This same effect was achieved in the GEFT by light shading of similar sections.

Simple forms are printed on the back cover of the GEFT booklet and the complex figures are printed on the booklet pages. The booklet was designed like such so that simple and complex figures cannot be exposed simultaneously. However, the subject may look back at the simple form as often as he or she wishes. The GEFT contains three sections. Seven very simple items used for practice are contained in the first section. The second and third sections each contain nine more difficult items. A subject earns one point for each correct simple figure identified. Scores range from 0, extremely field-dependent, to 18, extremely field-independent.

The Group Rorschach test was used to assess intellectualization. This group form is administered by presenting, for three minutes each, ten slides of inkblots on a projection screen. This technique provides a relatively ambiguous stimulus situation which enables the subject to reveal his or her individuality of functioning.

During the performance period each slide is presented and subjects are asked to write down what they think each inkblot might be. After presentation of all slides an inquiry period allows subjects to write down what determined each of their responses. Subjects indicate whether shape, color, texture, movement, or some combination of these was the determinant. The last phase of the Group Rorschach test allows the subjects to locate their responses on the set of inkblot prints contained in their own booklets.

Scoring of Group Rorschach protocols in the present study yielded four indices of intellectualization. These indices when combined result in a single score which is used as an overall index of intellectualization. The standard Rorschach scores used to derive the four intellectualization indices and the overall intellectualization rating are all commonly cited indicators of an intellectual manner of approach. Rapaport, Gill, and Schafer (1946) suggest that the total number of responses (R) is characteristic of the individual's quantitative productivity and appears to have a positive relation to intelligence and range of flexibility of interests. Schafer (1954) supports this notion suggesting that one form of intellectual virtuosity is quantity of ideas.

Klopfer and Davidson (1962) report large visual detail (D) and small visual detail (d) to indicate interest in the specific, in details, and in the concrete. In other words, they say it is a common-sense application of intelligence. An over-emphasis of D and d responses shows a preference for the obvious. An over-emphasis on d responses also is associated with pedantry, a need to be accurate, correct, and exact. Unusual detail (Dd) scores, when frequent, indicate obsessional, meticulous processes.

Klopfer, Ainsworth, Klopfer, and Holt (1954) indicate that when the Rorschach subject utilizes only the shape of the blot material in forming his concept (scored as F) this represents a limited or impoverished type of perception ignoring emotional and affectual nuances implied by color and shading elements.

Pope and Scott (1967) evaluate intellectualization's over-objectivity in terms of the reliance on relatively definite,

consensually verifiable aspects of the ink blot. Many of the responses are determined purely by the shape of the inkblot without the use of color and shading. Pope and Scott cite the intellectualizer's heavy emphasis on productivity to be expressed by the drive to develop a very large number of responses which are sterile and informative, doing so by developing separate responses to many edge details (de) and very tiny details (dd). Pope and Scott also describe the insensitivity to or denial of the affective components of Rorschach responses, shown by intellectualizers, to be expressed by denial of color, quantitatively expressed by relatively few color (C, C') responses.

Rorschach protocols were scored using the scoring method presented by Klopfer et al. (1954). The following standard Rorschach scores were used as four indices of the subjects' use of intellectualization of which the overall rating was derived: the total number of responses (R); the total number of detail responses (D + d + Dd); the total number of form without elaboration responses (F); and the total number of color responses (C' + FC + CF + C).

All protocols were scored by one rater. The summed standard Rorschach scores used to derive the four intellectualization indices were correlated with a second rater's scores for 20 randomly chosen protocols.

A third test used in this study was the Oklahoma Personal Style Inventory (OPSI). Specific items on the inventory relate to the interaction between the individual and the environment. The inventory assesses three types of environmental interactions, each of which emphasizes different coping styles.

Three independent scales for each of the three coping styles make up the inventory along with a Repression scale and a Social Desirability scale. The OPSI has the ability to distinguish between these different types of coping styles and may identify an individual's over-reliance on or underutilization of one or more of the styles.

The inventory consists of 46 statements. The subject indicates how he or she feels towards each by circling a corresponding number on a special answer sheet. The subject circles either 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 on a scale with 0 meaning "Disagree strongly" and 4 meaning "Agree strongly."

The three coping styles measured by the OPSI are Assimilation, Conservation, and Accommodation. Possible scores on these three clinical scales range from 0 - 40 with 40 indicating an extreme over-utilization of a particular style.

A fourth coping assessment method used in this study was the Coping Behaviors Inventory. Wong-Rieger (in press) has developed a 10-item list of coping strategy behaviors which measure the degree to which one might use each to solve particular problems.

The subject's task on this inventory is to read three vignettes, created by the present author, and imagine he or she is the main character. The vignettes were developed such that one of the vignettes presents an intrapersonal situation, one an interpersonal situation, and the other an impersonal situation. The validity of whether each vignette accurately portrays its intended situation was validated by a survey of ten graduate students in psychology at Oklahoma State University. All those surveyed agreed with the author's intended portrayals.



After reading each vignette, the subject rates the degree to which he or she would react the way each of the ten accompanying items describes. The subject rates each item 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. A rating of 1 means "Never do this" and a rating of 5 means "Do this almost all the time."

#### Procedure

Subjects were administered the four tests in two-hour group sessions with 20 subjects in each session. Initially, the experimenter introduced himself and explained he was researching coping behavior. Subjects were told they would perform pencil and paper tasks, complete survey material, and view slides and write their responses to the slides. Subjects were assured of their anonymity by the use of a numbered test coding method which required of them only to reveal their sex. Subjects were asked not to speak or leave their seats for the duration of the study unless requesting clarification of directions or needing a new pencil. All subjects completed each test before the experimenter presented the next test.

Each group's order of test presentation was selected in a random fashion with each group receiving a different order. Group and order of test presentation are shown in Table II.

TABLE II  
ORDER OF TEST PRESENTATION TO EACH  
OF FIVE GROUPS OF SUBJECTS

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Group	Order of Presentation
A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. OPSI</li><li>2. Coping Behaviors Inventory</li><li>3. GEFT</li><li>4. Group Rorschach</li></ol>
B	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Group Rorschach</li><li>2. GEFT</li><li>3. Coping Behaviors Inventory</li><li>4. OPSI</li></ol>
C	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Coping Behaviors Inventory</li><li>2. OPSI</li><li>3. GEFT</li><li>4. Group Rorschach</li></ol>
D	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. OPSI</li><li>2. Coping Behaviors Inventory</li><li>3. Group Rorschach</li><li>4. GEFT</li></ol>
E	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. GEFT</li><li>2. Coping Behaviors Inventory</li><li>3. OPSI</li><li>4. Group Rorschach</li></ol>

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## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The general hypothesis regarding the relationship of cognitive style and "ways of coping" was statistically analyzed using a variety of techniques. Multiple analyses of variances (MANOVAs) examined GEFT differences on the basis of Group Rorschach, OPSI, and Coping Behaviors Inventory performance generating a separate MANOVA for each comparison. A MANOVA technique was chosen to analyze the data in order to be sensitive to the dichotomous nature of the differentiation construct. To examine the data in more of a trend analysis a correlational approach was employed. A correlational analysis of the overall Group Rorschach intellectualization rating and GEFT performance was computed. Item-intercorrelations for all test score variables were also computed.

Further supplemental analyses included computation of Group Rorschach inter-rater reliability correlations, a principal components analysis of the Coping Behaviors Inventory, and a stepwise multiple regression with OPSI scores used as criterion variables and Coping Behaviors Inventory scores used as predictor variables.

The procedure for defining the independent variables for the MANOVAs was based upon a normative sample presented by Witkin, Oltman, Raskin, and Karp (1971). Subjects in the normative sample were men and women college students as in the present study. Scores on the GEFT can range from 0-18. The higher the score the more differentiated the

subject is said to be. Witkin et al. (1971) reported males to perform slightly, but significantly, more in a field-independent fashion than females ( $p < .005$ ). With an N of 397 the mean for males was 12.0 and 10.8 for females. In the present study the mean for males was 12.48 and for females was 11.51. The means for the two samples appear similar to Witkin's, with higher field-independent scores for males upheld. Based upon Witkin et al.'s (1971) quartile breakdown of GEFT scores female subjects in the present study were determined to be field-independent if their GEFT score was 12 or higher and field-dependent if their score was below 12. Male subjects had to reach a criteria of 13 to be labeled field-independent. Surprisingly, exactly 50 subjects were determined to be field-independent and 50 field-dependent. The GEFT data used in the MANOVAs were based upon whether the subjects were classified as field-dependent or field-independent; therefore, actual GEFT scores were not used in the MANOVAs.

The dependent variables for the MANOVAs for field-independence/dependence on the basis of the OPSI were the subjects' performance scores on the three clinical scales of Accommodation, Conservation, and Assimilation. The results, displayed in Table III, found none of the three OPSI scales to be significantly related to GEFT performance.

The dependent variables for the MANOVA for GEFT differences on the basis of the Group Rorschach Test were the subjects' performance scores on the following four intellectualization indices: number of responses, attention to detail, amount of form without elaboration, and amount of color used. Each subject's protocol totals for these four indices were standardized, using  $z$  scores to facilitate statistical analysis. It was predicted that the color index would be negatively correlated with the

other three indices. Therefore, the absolute value of the color index score, after standardization, was used as the color intellectualization index. The MANOVA results in Table IV show none of the four intellectualization indexes to be significantly related to GEFT performance.

TABLE III  
MANOVA FOR GEFT DIFFERENCES ON  
THE BASIS OF OPSI SCALES

Dependent Variable	DF	F Value	Pr > F
OPSI Accommodation	(1, 98)	.27	.60
OPSI Conservation	(1, 98)	2.58	.11
OPSI Assimilation	(1, 98)	.15	.70

The dependent variables for the MANOVA for GEFT differences on the basis of the Coping Behaviors Inventory were the subjects' ratings assigned to the ten statements following each scenario. Subjects' ratings for same statements across the three scenarios were averaged and then standardized using  $z$  scores. These standard scores were then used in a MANOVA. The MANOVA results in Table V show none of these ten items to be significantly related to GEFT performance.

TABLE IV  
 MANOVA FOR GEFT DIFFERENCES ON THE BASIS OF  
 DESIGNATED RORSCHACH SCORING CATEGORIES

Dependent Variable	DF	F Value	Pr > F
Responses	(1, 98)	.64	.43
Detail	(1, 98)	1.71	.20
Form	(1, 98)	.00	.95
Color	(1, 98)	.26	.61

TABLE V  
 MANOVA FOR GEFT DIFFERENCES ON THE BASIS OF COPING  
 BEHAVIORS INVENTORY ITEMS A THROUGH J

Dependent Variable	DF	F Value	Pr > F
A (Ignore/Forebearance . . .)	(1, 98)	.10	.75
B (Talk with someone . . .)	(1, 98)	.37	.55
C (Professional help . . .)	(1, 98)	.36	.55
D (Learn skills . . .)	(1, 98)	.60	.44
E (Change own values . . .)	(1, 98)	.30	.59
F (Avoid situations . . .)	(1, 98)	.49	.49
G (Change others . . .)	(1, 98)	.05	.82
H (Change situation/complain . . .)	(1, 98)	.50	.48
I (Distracting activities . . .)	(1, 98)	2.28	.14
J (Reinterpret . . .)	(1, 98)	.10	.76

The four standardized intellectualization indices were totaled to derive an overall intellectualization rating for each subject. As shown in Table VI all four indices were highly correlated with the overall intellectualization rating. Correlation coefficients in Table VII show the overall intellectualization rating not to be significantly related to GEFT performance. A non-significant correlation was found when comparing the overall Rorschach rating with subjects' dichotomized rating of being either field-independent or field-dependent. In addition, subjects' actual GEFT scores were found not to be significantly correlated to the overall Rorschach rating.

TABLE VI

CORRELATION OF RORSCHACH OVERALL INTELLECTUALIZATION RATINGS WITH DESIGNATED RORSCHACH SCORING CATEGORIES

Rorschach Scoring Category	r
Responses	.94*
Detail	.92*
Form	.86*
Color	.49*

\*p < .0001

TABLE VII  
CORRELATION OF RORSCHACH OVERALL  
INTELLECTUALIZATION RATINGS  
WITH GEFT PERFORMANCE

GEFT Performance Variable	r
Ratings <sup>a</sup>	.06
Scores <sup>b</sup>	.10

<sup>a</sup>Subjects' dichotomized rating as field-independent or field-dependent.

<sup>b</sup>Actual GEFT scores ranging from 0-18.

Among the specific behaviors, one item-intercorrelation coefficient which directly addressed the study's general hypothesis was significant ( $p < .05$ ). Item H ("change the situation; complain to someone in charge") of the Coping Behaviors Inventory and subject's actual GEFT scores were positively correlated.

The Group Rorschach inter-rater reliability correlation coefficients are shown in Table VIII. Coefficients in all four scoring categories show both raters' scores to be significantly related in a positive direction.

A principal components analysis of the Coping Behaviors Inventory was performed and results presented in Table IX were derived. Inventory items B, C, D, E, and J appear to load on Factor 1, while items A, G, H and I load highly on Factor 2.



TABLE VIII  
RORSCHACH INTER-RATER RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS  
FOR DESIGNATED SCORING CATEGORIES

Rorschach Scoring Category	r
Responses	.10*
Detail	.98*
Form	.93*
Color	.92*

\*p < .0001

TABLE IX  
FACTOR PATTERN DERIVED FROM PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS  
ANALYSIS OF COPING BEHAVIORS INVENTORY

Inventory Item	Factor1 <sup>a</sup> Loadings	Factor2 <sup>b</sup> Loadings
A (Ignore/Forebearance . . .)	.08	.70
B (Talk with someone . . .)	.63	.02
C (Professional help . . .)	.62	-.28
D (Learn skills . . .)	.74	-.05
E (Change own values . . .)	.59	-.10
F (Avoid situations . . .)	.15	.41
G (Change others . . .)	.25	.67
H (Change situation/complain . . .)	.05	.59
I (Distracting activities . . .)	.21	.51
J (Reinterpret . . .)	.63	-.27

<sup>a</sup>Eigenvalue of 2.19

<sup>b</sup>Eigenvalue of 1.87

A stepwise multiple regression was performed on OPSI values, using the Coping Behaviors Inventory items as predictor variables with the alpha value set at .15. The results are presented in Tables X, XI, and XII. In the regression of Conservation values and Inventory items only item C "seek help from counselor, minister or other professional person" met the criteria to be a significant predictor of Conservation values. Those significant predictors of Assimilation values shown in Table XI were items F and D "avoid the problem situation" and "learn some new skills or ways of changing your own behavior to deal with the problem". Significant predictors of Accommodation values shown in Table XII were Inventory items J and A "reinterpret the problem to see the positive aspects" and "ignore or accept the problem; hope it gets better."

TABLE X  
STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF OPSI SCALE CONSERVATION  
AND COPING BEHAVIORS INVENTORY ITEMS A THROUGH J

Step 1	Item C (Professional help . . .)		Entered
R <sup>2</sup>	DF	F Value	PR > F
.05	(1, 98)	5.17	.03
Intercept $\beta$ value = 21.97 Item C $\beta$ value = 1.07			

TABLE XI  
 STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF OPSI SCALE ASSIMILATION  
 AND COPING BEHAVIORS INVENTORY ITEMS A THROUGH J

Step 1	Item F (Avoid situation . . .)	Entered
$R^2$	DF	F Value
PR > F		
.07	(1, 98)	6.84
	Intercept $\beta$ value = 34.33	.01
	Item F $\beta$ value = -1.29	
Step 2	Item D (Learn skills. . .)	Entered
$R^2$	DF	F Value
PR > F		
.13	(2, 97)	6.94
	Intercept $\beta$ value = 29.95	.0015
	Item D $\beta$ value = 1.38	
	Item F $\beta$ value = -1.42	

TABLE XII

STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF OPSI SCALE ACCOMMODATION  
AND COPING BEHAVIORS INVENTORY ITEMS A THROUGH J

Step 1	Item J (Reinterpret. . .)	Entered	
R <sup>2</sup>	DF	F Value	PR > F
.05	(1, 98)	4.66	.03
Intercept $\beta$ value = 23.64 Item C $\beta$ value = .96			
Step 2	Item A (Ignore/Forebearance . . .)	Entered	
R <sup>2</sup>	DF	F Value	PR > F
.09	(2, 97)	4.82	.01
Intercept $\beta$ value = 21.02 Item A $\beta$ value = 1.03 Item J $\beta$ value = 1.03			

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The main hypothesis of this study was that global or specialized forms of coping behavior are related to either a field-dependent or field-independent cognitive style. It was predicted that use of specialized "ways of coping" would be positively related to a field-independent cognitive style.

This general hypothesis was not supported by the data. There was no consistent relationship between coping as measured by the Group Rorschach, the OPSI, and the Coping Behaviors Inventory and field-independence/dependence as measured by the Group Embedded Figures Test. Neither those "ways of coping" designated as global nor those designated as specialized were significantly related to field-dependence or field-independence.

This study represents a major contribution to the field in its attempts to examine simultaneously several levels of coping behavior. The results here strongly indicate that different levels are only marginally related despite previous studies which suggested relationships when only a few measures were used.

Unlike past studies which assessed intellectualization using the Rorschach technique, no correlation with cognitive style was revealed in this study. This is substantiated by both a MANOVA and correlational analysis. A MANOVA comparing Rorschach scores indicative of

intellectualization with subjects' classification of being either field-dependent or field-independent, as measured by the GEFT, showed no such relationship. Also, the correlational analysis of the cognitive style classification was not significantly correlated with the overall intellectualization ratings. These findings are of special importance in view of the fact that intellectualization has been a standard by which past research has shown a specialized "way of coping" to be positively related to field-independence.

This same pattern of results emerges at the higher levels of coping. Whether subjects were classified as field-independent or field-dependent did not prove to be an important determinant of their performance on the Coping Behaviors Inventory nor of the degree to which they employed Assimilation, Accommodation, or Conservation styles. Thus contrary to expectations, cognitive style does not predict overall coping style or choice of coping technique. While one item-intercorrelation was significant (between the actual GEFT scores and the Coping Behaviors Inventory item "change the situation; complain to someone in charge"), this is more likely a chance occurrence given the large number of correlations examined. Overall, these findings suggest that normal subjects may not adopt a consistent coping style and that they maintain a varied repertoire of coping behaviors. This would allow for greater flexibility and adaptability in response to different stressors or anxiety provoking situations.

The principal components analysis of the Coping Behaviors Inventory, revealed two independent factors. Factor 1 appears to consist of those aspects of coping which are related to working to change the self. This consists of an internalization of the conflict.

This might be termed an inner-directed factor. Factor 2's emphasis is on changing the external aspects of the problem or hoping it will eventually go away. Factor 2 might be termed an outer-directed factor.

The stepwise multiple regression of Coping Behaviors Inventory values on OPSI variables upholds the finding of the test development research on the OPSI. Those Coping Behaviors Inventory items which were significant predictors of performance on the three OPSI scales were exclusive to only one of the three scales showing no overlap, thus, showing evidence that the three OPSI scales measure different coping styles.

Seeking professional help was determined to predict a Conservation coping style. The Conservator with his or her rigid systemic boundaries is comfortable maintaining traditional patterns of behavior. It's likely that the Conservator's interactions with the environment are not very interactive due partially to a lack of practice. Thus, the Conservator's seeking professional help for dealing with problems reflects his or her lack of interactive skills as well as his or her unwillingness to change self, preferring a professional to deal with the problem.

The Accommodator, having porous and flexible systemic boundaries falls victim to the environment. Looking at the positive aspects of a problem, ignoring or accepting the problem, or hoping the problem gets better were found to be predictors of an Accommodation coping style. These types of behaviors do not imply any action by the Accommodator to change the environment but emphasize living with the stressors with a greater peace of mind.

Learning skills or ways to change your own behavior to deal with a problem as well as avoid the problem were found to be predictors of an Assimilation coping style. These types of behaviors appear to reflect the Assimilator's end goal of modifying the environment and possibly being insightful to know when a problem should be avoided rather than be confronted.

With regard to the reliability of the scoring of Group Rorschach protocols, the high positive correlations found between the judges' ratings validates the accuracy of the Rorschach data used throughout the various analyses.

The absence of a relationship between cognitive style and "ways of coping" as found in the present study may not be generalizable however to other populations. The present results should be viewed within the context of the behavior of a normal population. Future research might include a clinical as well as a normal sample possibly revealing polarities of field-independence/dependence or Rorschach performances not detected in the present study. The homogeneity of the college sample may well have had some bearing on these results. A more heterogeneous sample might have exhibited a greater variability of performance possibly resulting in alternate findings.

In light of the results, we would like to offer another consideration regarding the appropriateness of categorizing "ways of coping" as being field-dependent or field-independent. Perhaps the constructs of field-dependence and field-independence are such encompassing concepts that any one particular "way of coping" has foundations in both. For example, intellectualization is used in the individual's life in a global fashion. Operating at an unconscious level enables



intellectualization to flavor all our thought and behavior in a global fashion. Intellectualization also involves precision and paying close attention to detail in a specialized manner. So is intellectualization a coping alternative of a field-independent or dependent nature? The results of the present study suggest neither.

Other factors which might account for the results of this study concern themselves with the methods used for statistical analysis and the methods of assessing the various "ways of coping." Alternative statistical techniques with more emphasis on trend analysis, correlational approaches and perhaps a comprehensive factor analysis might have proved fruitful for examining nondichotomous and nonlinear functions. Also, the assessment techniques for the various "ways of coping" measured are themselves not without variability in degree of accuracy. Two of the measures used have very recently been developed while the other's validity has historically been controversial.

In summary, there are two possible interpretations of the results obtained here. First, that the concepts of field-dependence and field-independence are much too broad and non-distinguishing to lend themselves as standards to categorically classify "ways of coping." Second, field-independence and field-dependence may not represent polar ends of a single construct but two separate dimensions so that while a person may favor one or the other, he or she may be high or low in both.

It is of value that we can lay to rest questions which this thesis addresses. Knowing that coping behavior is not influenced by psychological differentiation in such a manner opens the doors to other possible hypotheses which might help us to more fully understand the coping process.

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**APPENDIXES**

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

1980-1981

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APPENDIX A

OKLAHOMA PERSONAL STYLE INVENTORY

## OKLAHOMA PERSONAL STYLE INVENTORY

Instructions: Please read the following statements, decide how you feel about each one, and fill in the appropriate blank on the special answer sheet. For each statement, the answer sheet has five letters which have the following meanings:

- A: Agree Strongly
- B: Agree Somewhat
- C: Neither Agree nor Disagree
- D: Disagree Somewhat
- E: Disagree Strongly

For example, if you strongly agree with the statement "I get angry when people don't keep their promises" you should carefully fill in the blank below the letter for that item as follows, 

A	B	C	D	E
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

. If you felt somewhat negatively about the statement "I enjoy historical pageants", you should fill in the blank below the letter D 

A	B	C	D	E
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

. If you felt that the statement "I am an active person" was neither true nor false as applied to you, you should fill in the blank below the letter C 

A	B	C	D	E
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, but if you should change your mind, be sure to erase your mark completely. Please respond to all the statements and work as quickly as possible.

## Oklahoma Personal Style Inventory

1. I am good at organizing things.
2. Schools should emphasize moral and religious training.
3. One might as well learn to accept the fact that there will always be conflict among people who want the same things.
4. I enjoy the excitement of a crowd.
5. It makes me uncomfortable to put on a stunt at a party even when others are doing the same sort of things.
6. I enjoy parties.
7. I blush no more often than others.
8. I value spiritual growth most highly.
9. My parents and family find more fault in me than they should.
10. I enjoy doing things with other people.
11. I do not tire quickly.
12. I feel comfortable around most people, even if they have backgrounds different from my own.
13. It's important to me to feel I have roots in the community where I live.
14. I usually handle uncomfortable situations by trying to change what is happening.
15. I have long range goals which I hope to achieve.
16. It is easy for people to get to know me.
17. I work harder than most people.
18. Some of my family have quick tempers.
19. The more challenging the assignment, the more I like it.
20. Life is most satisfying for me when it consists of familiar activities with few surprises.
21. It makes me nervous when I have to wait.
22. I like to flirt.
23. My hands and feet are usually warm enough.

## Oklahoma Personal Style Inventory

-continued-

24. I tend to enjoy those activities which allow me to be with other people.
25. Society is in trouble today because people do not respect the traditional values which have withstood the test of time.
26. It makes me impatient to have people ask my advice or otherwise interrupt me when I am working on something important.
27. I tend to enjoy those activities which allow me to develop my skills.
28. Once in a while I feel hate towards members of my family whom I usually love.
29. I am rather traditional.
30. At times I feel like picking a fist fight with someone.
31. I have reason for feeling jealous of one or more of my family members.
32. I like to spend most of my money on things I want, even if I have to borrow to meet unexpected expenses.
33. I am a carefree person.
34. I am often inclined to go out of my way to win a point with someone who has opposed me.
35. I try to avoid situations where I might be in conflict with other people, even if it means not doing something I want to do.
36. My mother or father often made me obey even when I thought it was unreasonable.
37. I can be depended upon to carry my share of the load.
38. I take pride in being highly productive.
39. I sometimes work with people I don't like when it's necessary to achieve my goals.
40. At times I feel like smashing things.
41. I enjoy doing things which are routine and familiar.
42. For me, the good life is one of stability and continuity.



## Oklahoma Personal Style Inventory

-continued-

43. My family does not like the work I have chosen (or the work I intend to choose for my life work).
44. I expect a lot of myself.
45. I am more self-reliant than most people.
46. When I have difficulties, I tend to look to my family for help.

APPENDIX B

COPING BEHAVIORS INVENTORY

## COPING BEHAVIORS INVENTORY

Following are several short scenarios. In each of these, try to imagine that you are the main character, and answer the question which follows. Please do not omit any questions. If you are not sure of an answer, please mark your best guess. There are no right or wrong answers. In each case, we are interested in your personal opinion. All questionnaires are strictly confidential.

Scenario 1

You work part-time as an assembly line worker for a car manufacturer and also go to college. Car sales have recently slumped. Your company informs you that if the sales slump continues you will be among the next to be laid off. This comes at a bad time for you because you've gotten behind in paying your bills the past few months. You're worried that you may get even farther behind now and stand to have your personal belongings repossessed.

Following are a list of ways in which you might try to solve this problem. Rate the degree to which you would do each of the following given you are the main character in the scenario.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Sometimes	Regularly	Frequently	Do This
Do This	Do This	Do This	Do This	Almost All The Time

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Ignore or accept the problem; hope it gets better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Talk with someone who has a similar problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Seek help from counselor, minister, or other professional person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Learn some new skills or ways of changing your own behavior to deal with the problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Change your own values or beliefs; try to accept other person's point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. Avoid the problem situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ g. Try to change other people's behavior; get them to see your point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ h. Change the situation; complain to someone in charge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ i. Do something else to take your mind off the problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ j. Reinterpret the problem to see the positive aspects.

Scenario 2

Your first year of college you go away to a university in a different part of the country. The environment is very different from your hometown. This is also the first time you have not lived with your family. You have a full scholarship to this university and have no other way to finance your education. You want a college education; however, you're homesick and would like to be at home.

Following are a list of ways in which you might try to solve this problem. Rate the degree to which you would do each of the following given you are the main character in the scenario.

1	2	3	4	5
Never Do This	Sometimes Do This	Regularly Do This	Frequently Do This	Do This Almost All The Time

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Ignore or accept the problem; hope it gets better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Talk with someone who has a similar problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Seek help from counselor, minister, or other professional person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Learn some new skills or ways of changing your own behavior to deal with the problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Change your own values or beliefs; try to accept other person's point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. Avoid the problem situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ g. Try to change other people's behavior; get them to see your point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ h. Change the situation; complain to someone in charge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ i. Do something else to take your mind off the problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ j. Reinterpret the problem to see the positive aspects.

Scenario 3

You decide to share an apartment with a friend. After only a month of living together, you're not getting along. Your roommate does things which annoy you. You also do things which annoy him/her. It's gotten to the point where you're not even talking to each other.

Following are a list of ways in which you might try to solve this problem. Rate the degree to which you would do each of the following given you are the main character in the scenario.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Sometimes	Regularly	Frequently	Do This
Do This	Do This	Do This	Do This	Almost All The Time

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Ignore or accept the problem; hope it gets better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Talk with someone who has a similar problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Seek help from counselor, minister, or other professional person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Learn some new skills or ways of changing your own behavior to deal with the problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Change your own values or beliefs; try to accept other person's point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. Avoid the problem situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ g. Try to change other people's behavior; get them to see your point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ h. Change the situation; complain to someone in charge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ i. Do something else to take your mind off the problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ j. Reinterpret the problem to see the positive aspects.

VITA 2

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