

Adolescent Athletes' Coping During Competition and Test Taking: The Effect of Context and Cognitive Appraisal

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Sport research has yet to explain why both consistency and inconsistency exists in adolescent athletes' coping utilization in different contexts (e.g., Crocker & Isaac, 1997). Lazarus (1991) proposes that coping utilization is associated with the cognitive appraisal that is specific to the context. This study tests this proposition by investigating adolescent athletes' coping and cognitive appraisal during athletic competition and test taking. Swimmers and track and field athletes from Alberta ($N = 159$; $M_{age} = 14.9$ years, $SD_{age} = 1.6$; 66% female) completed the Modified Inclusion of Self Scale, Beliefs About Perceived Control, Stress Thermometer, and the Brief-Cope Inventory on two separate occasions. For each athlete, the two testing sessions took place within 72 hours of an important sport competition and final exam. A series of Cognitive Appraisal X Context ANOVAs, with repeated measures on the last factor examined the moderating role of cognitive appraisal. Gender was applied as a covariate for venting, information and emotion social support, and engagement coping. Athletes' appraisal of stress moderated the use of information social support in the different contexts [$F(1, 121) = 5.21, p = .02$]. Athlete's identity moderated the use of humour [$F(2, 122) = 3.22, p = .04$]. The interaction of identity and perceptions of control over emotions moderated athletes' use of venting [$F(1, 122) = 3.30, p = .04$] and disengagement coping [$F(1, 118) = 3.33, p = .04$]. Finally, athletes' use of behavioural disengagement coping was moderated by the interaction of cognitive appraisal variables [$F(1, 120) = 4.36, p = .04$]. It is concluded that differences in an adolescent athlete's evaluation of athletic competition and test taking contributes to a unique coping response for that context.