



LJMU Research Online

Nicholls, AR, Perry, JL, Jones, L, Morley, D and Carson, F

Dispositional Coping, Coping Effectiveness, and Cognitive Social Maturity Among Adolescent Athletes

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/3183/>

Article

Citation (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

**Nicholls, AR, Perry, JL, Jones, L, Morley, D and Carson, F (2013)
Dispositional Coping, Coping Effectiveness, and Cognitive Social Maturity
Among Adolescent Athletes. JOURNAL OF SPORT & EXERCISE
PSYCHOLOGY. 35 (3). pp. 229-238. ISSN 0895-2779**

LJMU has developed **LJMU Research Online** for users to access the research output of the University more effectively. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LJMU Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of the record. Please see the repository URL above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information please contact researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/>

1

2

Revised Manuscript # 2012_0174R.1

3

4

Dispositional Coping, Coping Effectiveness, and Cognitive Social Maturity among

5

Adolescent Athletes

6

7

8

9

10

1 Abstract

2 It is accepted among scholars that coping changes as people mature during adolescence, but
3 little is known about the relationship between maturity and coping. The purpose of this paper
4 was to assess a model, which included dispositional coping, coping effectiveness, and
5 cognitive social maturity. We predicted that cognitive social maturity would have a direct
6 effect on coping effectiveness, and also an indirect impact via dispositional coping. Two-
7 hundred and forty-five adolescent athletes completed measures of dispositional coping,
8 coping effectiveness, and cognitive social maturity, which has three dimensions:
9 conscientiousness, peer influence on behavior, and rule following. Using structural equation
10 modeling we found support for our model, suggesting that coping is related to cognitive
11 social maturity. This information can be used to influence the content of coping interventions
12 for adolescents of different maturational levels.

13 *Keywords:* Adolescence, Maturation, Motivational Climate, Structural Equation
14 Modeling

15

1 2011). As such, dispositional coping relates to the thoughts and behaviors an individual
2 would normally engage in to manage demands that are appraised as being stressful, and
3 represents a macro-level of analysis of coping. Within the sport literature, the vast majority of
4 studies have tended to view coping at the micro-level of analysis (for a review see Nicholls &
5 Polman, 2007). As such, most studies have explored how people coped with specific events
6 (e.g., Amiot, Gaudreau, & Blanchard, 2004) and even how coping changed over time (e.g.,
7 Gaudreau, Nicholls, & Levy, 2010).

8 However, it is important that researchers explore dispositional coping to understand
9 more about this psychological construct (Hurst et al., 2011). Indeed, according to Lazarus and
10 Folkman (1984), dispositional or macro-level coping should be viewed as the structure,
11 which influences the process as “structure and process are both necessary for an
12 understanding of coping” (p. 298). This has been supported in sports studies, which have
13 revealed strong correlations between dispositional and process coping (Anshel & Anderson,
14 2002; Giacobbi & Weinberg, 2002). Furthermore, Louvet, Gaudreau, Menaut, Genty, and
15 Deneuve (2007) found that, on the whole, athletes did not change how they coped across
16 three competitions held over six months.

17 Assessing dispositional coping may even allow researchers to explore different
18 questions and assess coping in a broader context (Hurst et al., 2011). For example, assessing
19 coping during a specific episode of sport might not be reflective of how an athlete would
20 normally cope, and might yield a distorted view of coping. Assessing coping at the
21 dispositional level might provide a more accurate representation of how an athlete normally
22 copes. There are two different ways of measuring dispositional coping (Lazarus, 1999).
23 Researchers can measure how an individual copes across a variety of situations and then
24 average the person’s score, to illustrate what the person normally does. However, this can be
25 very time intensive, and may not be suitable when exploring how certain populations cope,

1 such as adolescents due to their busy lives. An alternative approach is to use a dispositional
2 coping inventory.

3 **Coping and Development during Adolescence**

4 Early and middle adolescence, the period in which a person is aged between 12 and
5 18 years old (Weiss & Bredemeier, 1983), is thought to be the period in which coping
6 changes the most (Compas et al., 2001). Coping changes during adolescence because it is
7 thought to be reliant upon a person's level of biological, social, cognitive, and emotional
8 maturity. As such, the maturation of a person contributes to the coping strategies at his or her
9 disposal and also limits the available coping strategies (Compas et al.). Despite these
10 assertions made by Compas et al., little is known about how athletes' coping may change
11 during adolescence. There are, however, two notable exceptions that have attempted to
12 address this issue in the sport literature (Nicholls, Polman, Morley, & Taylor, 2009;
13 Tamminen & Holt, 2012).

14 Based upon the theoretical assertions of Compas et al. (2001), Nicholls, Polman,
15 Morley, and Taylor (2009) explored whether athletes of different biological development
16 used diverse coping strategies, whilst competing in sport, and whether the effectiveness of
17 such strategies varied across pubertal groups. In total, 527 athletes completed a measure of
18 micro-level coping and biological development. Their results indicated that athletes of
19 different pubertal status, and therefore biological development, reported diverse coping
20 strategies, which corresponded to what they did. For instance, advanced- and post-pubertal
21 athletes reported that distancing corresponded to what they did to cope less than beginning-
22 or middle-pubertal athletes. Additionally, mid-pubertal athletes reported that mental
23 distraction corresponded to what they did to cope more than either advanced- or post-pubertal
24 athletes. Furthermore, strategies such as mental distraction were more effective at reducing
25 stress for post-pubertal athletes. As such, these findings provide support for Compas et al.,

1 who suggested that coping is related to biological maturity.

2 Another study that attempted to explain how adolescents learn to cope, and thus
3 develop a coping repertoire, was by Tamminen and Holt (2012). With a sample of 17
4 athletes, 10 parents, and 7 coaches, Tamminen and Holt found that learning to cope was an
5 experiential process that involved trial and error, reflective practice, and understanding
6 coping outcomes. Furthermore, parents and coaches were thought to help athletes with
7 coping. However, a limitation of this paper is that the authors failed to examine or
8 acknowledge maturational processes, yet indirectly alluded to them in their findings. For
9 instance, a key element of the Tamminen and Holt (2012) paper related to the importance of
10 reflective practice. However, it is entirely plausible that an athlete can only engage in
11 reflection when he or she has established a certain level of cognitive maturity (Williams &
12 McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999). Indeed, Williams and McGillicuddy-De Lisi argued that
13 cognitive maturational changes produce an increased awareness of coping that allows people
14 to develop coping and judge how effective it will be. This awareness, associated with
15 cognitive maturity, is crucial for reflective practice regarding coping. As such, it might have
16 been the development of athletes' cognitive maturity levels that influenced their ability to
17 reflect upon coping outcomes and learn new coping skills in the Tamminen and Holt study.
18 However, because Tamminen and Holt did not measure cognitive maturity, it remains unclear
19 whether their findings were associated with cognitive maturity.

20 At the present time, there is little empirical evidence to explain why coping may
21 change during adolescence, and the impact that maturational processes has upon coping.
22 Although scholars have made some inroads by examining the relationship between coping
23 and biological maturity, the other types of maturation proposed by Compas et al. (2001) have
24 not been explored. That is, little is known about the relationship between coping and
25 cognitive, social, and emotion maturity. Understanding more about the relationship between

1 maturity and coping is important for the development of theory and coping interventions.
2 This is because maturity levels may influence the type of coping strategies that adolescents
3 are able to use, so understanding more about maturity and coping could provide information
4 regarding what coping strategies psychologists could include in coping interventions and
5 tailor these based upon maturity levels.

6 As such, the purpose of this paper was to assess a model of dispositional coping,
7 coping effectiveness, and cognitive social maturity. Our hypotheses are illustrated in Figure
8 1, with an unbroken line inferring a positive relationship and a broken line a negative
9 relationship. We hypothesized that coping would be positively related to the three subscales
10 of cognitive social maturity, based on previous research that has found a relationship between
11 biological maturity and coping (Nicholls et al., 2009) and the notion that reflection is crucial
12 to coping (Tamminen & Holt, 2012; Williams & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999). More
13 specifically, we hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between
14 conscientiousness and rule following with task-oriented coping, but a negative relationship
15 between peer-influence on behavior and task-oriented coping. This is because task-oriented
16 coping strategies are associated with athletes maximizing efforts to engage in a task. Those
17 who are conscientiousness and follow rules from their coaches and team mates would be
18 more likely to normally cope this way. Conversely, we predicted that task-oriented coping
19 would be negatively associated with peer influence on behavior, as those who are influenced
20 by their peers may be more distracted and use less task-oriented strategies, and indeed make
21 less attempts to cope in general. We predicted that all three dispositional coping dimensions,
22 task-, distraction-, and disengagement-oriented coping strategies would be negatively
23 associated with peer influence on behavior. We also predicted that distraction- and
24 disengagement-oriented coping would be negatively associated with conscientiousness, peer
25 influence on behavior, and rule following. This is because athletes who are less mature would

1 be more likely to not take responsibility by using more avoidance based strategies associated
2 with these two coping dimensions. This would be consistent with Nicholls et al. (2009), who
3 found that biologically more mature athletes tended to use less of these strategies.

4 Furthermore, we also predicted that task-oriented coping would be positively
5 associated with coping effectiveness, whereas distraction- and disengagement-oriented
6 coping would be negatively associated with coping effectiveness. Although not reported in
7 the Nicholls et al. (2009) paper, inspection of their mean scores indicated that task-oriented
8 coping strategies were generally more effective across gender and pubertal status.

9 We also hypothesized that there would be relationship between cognitive social
10 maturity and coping effectiveness. With regards to the specific subscales of cognitive social
11 maturity, we predicted that conscientiousness and rule following would be positively
12 associated with coping effectiveness. This is because athletes high in these forms of maturity
13 would use more task-oriented coping strategies, which is associated with more effective
14 coping (Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & Bloomfield, 2006). Peer influence on behavior was
15 predicted to be negatively associated with coping effectiveness, because athletes who were
16 more strongly influenced by their peers would be too distracted to cope and use fewer coping
17 strategies. Not deploying coping strategies has been associated with more ineffective coping
18 (Nicholls, Holt, & Polman, 2005).

19 Our structural equation model also examined mediation effects. This is a significant
20 benefit of a structural equation modeling, as it enables multiple mediating variables to be
21 tested (Iacobucci, Saldanha, & Xiaoyan, 2007). The assessment of mediation has often used
22 differing approaches, though the preferred approach in the recent literature is bootstrapping.
23 Hayes (2009) explained that bootstrapping is effective because it does not have the same
24 assumptions of sampling distribution for indirect effects as other methods. We expected
25 significant mediation to take place, with the different types of coping strategies being

1 mediating variables. In particular, we expected distraction-oriented and disengagement-
2 oriented coping strategies to negatively mediate the relationship between cognitive social
3 maturity and coping effectiveness, given the relationship between strategies from these
4 dimensions and biological maturity (Nicholls et al., 2009).

5 **Method**

6 **Participants**

7 Two-hundred and forty-five adolescent athletes (male $n = 139$, female $n = 106$), who
8 were aged between 11 and 18 years (M age = 15.03, $SD = 1.93$) participated in this study.
9 Participants were recruited from three schools, a professional sport team, and a national
10 governing body. Our sample consisted of 193 Caucasian, 35 Asian, and 17 African-
11 Caribbean athletes, from a variety of different sports. The athletes in our sample competed at
12 international ($n = 34$), national ($n = 35$), county ($n = 39$), club ($n = 98$), and beginner levels (n
13 = 39).

14 **Questionnaires**

15 Dispositional coping was assessed using the Dispositional Coping Inventory for
16 Competitive Sport (DCICS; Hurst et al., 2011). This questionnaire assesses three higher-order
17 dispositional dimensions (e.g., task-oriented coping, distraction-oriented coping, and
18 disengagement-oriented coping) from 10 different dispositional coping strategies, which
19 represent what athletes normally do cope during sport when experiencing stress. An example
20 of task-oriented question was “I visualize that I am in total control of the situation,” whereas
21 “I retreat to a place where it is easy to think” is an example of a distraction-oriented question.
22 “I lose all hope of attaining my goal” is an example of a disengagement-oriented coping
23 strategy. Athletes were asked to rate how they normally cope on a 5-point Likert-type scale,
24 with 1 representing “Does not correspond to what I do or think” to 5 representing
25 “Corresponds very strongly to what I do or think.” Hurst et al. did not report Cronbach alpha

1 coefficients for three higher-order dimensions of the DCICS. Instead, they reported Cronbach
2 alpha coefficients for the 10 dispositional strategies ranging from .6 to .8 from a sample of
3 596 athletes, who were aged between 18 and 23 years of age.

4 The coping effectiveness scale (Gottlieb & Rooney, 2004) indicated how effectively the
5 athletes were coping with the stressor that was causing them the most worry in sport. Items in
6 this questionnaire include “The ways I try to cope are not working too well these days,” “I
7 question whether I’m handling this problem as well as I could,” and “I can find more or
8 different ways to cope with this stressor.” The coping effectiveness scale is a 7-item scale, in
9 which participants were asked to report the effectiveness of their coping with stress on a 4-
10 point Likert-type scale, anchored at 1 representing “*Strongly disagree*” to 4 representing
11 “*Strongly agree*.” Gottlieb and Rooney reported that the coping effectiveness scale had an
12 internal reliability of .69 from a sample of 141 family caregivers aged between 31 and 88
13 years of age.

14 Cognitive social maturity was assessed using the 8-item Cognitive Social Maturity
15 Questionnaire (CSMQ; Levers-Landis, Greenley, Burant, & Borawski, 2006). The CSMQ
16 (Levers-Landis et al., 2006) contains two types of cognitive maturity with three questions
17 (i.e., conscientiousness and rule following) and one with two questions (i.e., peer influence
18 on behavior). Examples of questions include “When I make a mistake, I always admit that I
19 am wrong,” “Sometimes I say something just to impress my friends”, and “Sometimes I try to
20 get even when someone does something to me that I don’t like.” Items are scored on a 4-point
21 Likert-type scale anchored at 1 representing “*Strongly disagree*” and 4 representing
22 “*Strongly agree*.” Levers-Landis et al. (2006) reported Cronbach alpha coefficients of .59
23 for conscientiousness, .53 for peer influence, and .42 for rule following from a sample of
24 1322 adolescents aged between 12 and 18 years of age.

1 **Procedure**

2 Ethical approval for this study, from a University Ethics Committee, was granted.
3 Information letters were then sent to heads of physical education at schools, a governing
4 body, and professional sports team. The letter contained information about the nature of the
5 study and the requirements of participants. If the teacher or coach granted permission for data
6 to be collected, an information letter, assent form, and consent form were sent for
7 parents/guardians to sign, in the instance of a participant been 15 years of age and under.

8 Participants completed the questionnaires, in the same order, with a teacher, coach, or
9 trained research assistant present to answer any questions. As such, each participant
10 completed the DCICS (Hurst et al., 2011), the coping effectiveness scale (Gottlieb & Rooney,
11 2004), and then the CSMQ (Levers-Landis et al., 2006).

12 **Data Analysis**

13 Data was screened for outliers and normality and composite reliability was calculated
14 on all study variables. Composite reliability was preferred to the commonly used Cronbach's
15 alpha coefficient after Raykov (1997) demonstrated that it is less likely to underestimate scale
16 reliability. To sufficiently test the measurement model, confirmatory factor analyses were
17 conducted on each measurement scale. Though often sighted as cutoff values, Hu and
18 Bentler's (1999) recommendation for assessing model fit (CFI and TLI > .95, RMSEA < .06,
19 SRMR < .08) were used for guidance only, as several researchers (e.g., Hopwood &
20 Donnellan, 2010; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004) have advocated a more subjective
21 interpretation. For the main analysis, we tested the hypothesized structural equation model
22 that examined the effect of cognitive social maturity on coping effectiveness, mediated by
23 task-, distraction-, and disengagement-oriented dispositional coping (Figure 1). Finally,
24 pairwise comparisons were used to determine whether significant effects for sex and skill
25 level were evident.

1 **Results**

2 **Preliminary Analysis**

3 Preliminary analysis screened for missing values, normality, linearity and outliers, as
4 recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001). There were no missing values or issues
5 regarding skewness (< 2) or kurtosis (< 2). Mardia's coefficient for multivariate kurtosis
6 exceeded expected values for the assumption of multivariate normality (17.6). To account for
7 this, we applied a Bollen-Stine bootstrap to the subsequent analysis. Linear relationships were
8 confirmed via inspection of bivariate scatter plots for each variable and there were no
9 significant outliers that required action.

10 Composite reliability of eight of the DCICS (Hurst et al., 2011) demonstrated
11 acceptable internal consistency ($CR = >.7$). Thought control, a sub-dimension of logical
12 analysis was slightly below ($CR = .66$). While this was considered at the lower end of
13 acceptability, distancing, a sub-dimension of distraction-oriented coping was too low ($CR =$
14 $.56$) and was consequently removed from further analysis. Analysis of the CSMQ (Levers-
15 Landis et al., 2006) revealed no reliability problems ($CR = >.7$) on any subscale. Initial
16 reliability analysis of the coping effectiveness scale suggested weak consistency ($CR = .56$).
17 Examination of regression weights identified that items six and seven did not positively
18 contribute to the scale. Following the removal of these items, CR reached a lower bound level
19 of acceptability ($CR = .66$). Descriptive statistics for cognitive social maturity, coping, and
20 coping effectiveness are displayed in Table 1. To confirm the factorial validity of scales,
21 separate CFAs were conducted on each scale. To account for any violations in the assumption
22 of multivariate normality and potential clustering effects from the sampling method, we
23 performed a Bollen-Stine bootstrap (B-S) on 2000 samples, as recommended by Nevitt and
24 Hancock (2001). The DCICS (Hurst et al., 2011) CFA largely supported the factorial validity:
25 $\chi^2(524) = 793.4$, B-S $p = .020$, CFI = .90, TLI = .89, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .05 (90% CI =

1 .04-.05). The coping effectiveness scale, with the two items previously deleted presented an
2 acceptable fit: $\chi^2(5) = 13.5$, B-S $p = .099$, CFI = .97, TLI = .93, SRMR = .13, RMSEA = .08
3 (90% CI = .03-.14). The CSMQ (Levers-Landis et al., 2006) presented a near perfect model
4 fit, but the highly constrained nature of the scale makes interpretation difficult: $\chi^2(17) = 14.7$,
5 B-S $p = .785$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .00 (90% CI = .00-.05).

6 **Main Analyses**

7 The hypothesized model fitted the data very well: $\chi^2(37) = 55.0$, B-S $p = .182$, CFI =
8 .97, TLI = .95, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .05 (90% CI = .02-.07). Of particular note are the
9 significant negative predictors of coping effectiveness. Namely, dispositional distraction- and
10 disengagement-oriented coping dimensions both negatively predicted coping effectiveness.
11 The relationship between dispositional task-oriented coping and coping effectiveness was
12 neutral. There were no significant direct effects between cognitive social maturity and coping
13 effectiveness. However, several aspects of maturity did significantly predict coping
14 strategies. Most notably, conscientiousness was a positive predictor of dispositional task-
15 oriented coping ($\gamma = .26$) and a negative predictor of dispositional disengagement-oriented
16 coping ($\gamma = -.23$), while peer influence on behavior negatively predicted dispositional
17 distraction- ($\gamma = -.34$) and disengagement-oriented coping ($\gamma = -.18$). Contrary to expectation,
18 rule following was a significant predictor of dispositional distraction-oriented coping ($\gamma = -$
19 .16). Peer influence on behavior had a significant negative indirect effect on coping
20 effectiveness ($\gamma = .10$; see Table 2). Although this was the only significant indirect effect,
21 there seemed a trend to support coping strategies as a mediator between cognitive social
22 maturity and coping effectiveness. To test whether mediation had taken place, we removed
23 regression paths directly from maturity dimensions to coping effectiveness (Figure 2). As the
24 model fit was not improved ($\Delta\text{CFI} < .01$) in the combined effects model, our results support
25 the mediation model. In particular, the mediation model highlights a significant positive

1 indirect effect from conscientiousness ($\gamma = .08$) and peer influence ($\gamma = .12$) to coping
2 effectiveness (see Table 3).

3 Finally, we examined pairwise comparisons to identify significant differences for
4 gender and skill level. In terms of gender effects, the regression weights between
5 conscientiousness and coping effectiveness, along with rule following and distraction-
6 oriented dispositional coping were significantly ($p < .05$) greater for males. The path between
7 dispositional task-oriented d coping and coping effectiveness was significantly greater for
8 females. There were no significant effects for skill level.

9 **Discussion**

10 The aim of this paper was to explore a model of dispositional coping, coping
11 effectiveness, and cognitive social maturity. Overall, the predicted paths within our model
12 were generally supported. This provides support for Compas et al. (2002), who stated that
13 coping is associated with the maturation that occurs across adolescence.

14 With regards to dispositional coping and cognitive social maturity dimensions, it
15 appears that conscientiousness is the most important form of cognitive social maturity in
16 relation to coping. Our finding that conscientiousness was positively associated with
17 dispositional task-oriented coping, but negatively with dispositional disengagement-oriented
18 coping provides support for previous research that has explored the relationship between
19 conscientiousness and coping within the context of personality. For example, Kaiseler,
20 Polman, and Nicholls (2011) explored the relationship between micro coping and personality.
21 Overall, task-oriented type coping strategies, such as increasing effort and planning were
22 positively associated with conscientiousness, but negatively with disengagement-oriented
23 type strategies behavioral disengagement. Bartley and Roesch (2011) also found a positive
24 relationship between task-oriented type coping strategies and conscientiousness. Individuals
25 who scored highly in conscientiousness, and were therefore cognitively more mature, have

1 been found to be more self-determined and persistent (McCrae & John, 1992). This could
2 explain why these athletes use more task-oriented type coping strategies, because these
3 strategies require persistence and effort. The fact that more there was a relationship between
4 task-oriented coping and a form of cognitive social maturity, indicates that the athletes may
5 have reflected upon their coping and the effectiveness of their coping, because existing
6 research indicates that task-oriented coping strategies are generally more effective (Gaudreau
7 et al., 2010; Nicholls et al., 2006). As such, the more mature athletes may have an increased
8 awareness which has allowed them to judge that dispositional task-oriented coping strategies
9 would be more effective. This also provides support for Williams and McGillicuddy-De Lisi
10 (1999), who stated that maturational changes allow people to assess coping effectiveness
11 more efficiently. Establishing whether athletes can be taught to reflect on their coping, before
12 they are sufficiently mature to do so naturally would represent an interesting line of research.

13 The other two forms of cognitive social maturity, peer influence on behavior and rule
14 following were not associated with dispositional task-oriented coping. However, peer
15 influence on behavior correlated negatively with both dispositional distraction- and
16 disengagement-oriented coping. Dispositional disengagement-oriented coping also correlated
17 negatively with rule following. As such, some of the athletes in the present study might have
18 reported disengagement-oriented coping styles to avoid thinking about rules they have
19 broken, or indeed things they feel guilty about, such as how friends had negatively influenced
20 their behavior. Indeed, previous research has found a direct link between situational
21 disengagement-oriented coping and guilt from other areas of psychology, such the guilt
22 associated with post-traumatic stress (Held, Owens, Schumm, & Chard, 2011) and being
23 obese (Conradt, Dierk, Schlumberger, Rauh, Heberand, & Rief, 2008). An interesting avenue
24 of research would be to explore the effects of rule breaking among adolescents and
25 psychological well-being.

1 Unlike dispositional disengagement-oriented coping, dispositional distraction-oriented
2 coping correlated positively with rule following. There may have been a positive association
3 between distraction-oriented coping styles and rule following behaviors, because the athletes
4 may have been trying to forget that they were following rules when perhaps their peers might
5 not have been. Furthermore, following rules and complying with ideal behaviors, such as
6 listening to a coach or following instructions when peers might not be, could be stressful.
7 This is because adolescents are generally concerned with their status within a group and
8 enhancing their status, and following rules may not enhance an adolescent's status among his
9 or her peers (LaFontana & Cillessen, 2010). As such, athletes could have reported
10 distraction-oriented coping styles to reduce emotional responses to stress associated with
11 concerns about their reduced status among peers for following rules. Research could consider
12 the effects of perceived peer group status among athletes in more detail to explore why
13 different coping styles are adopted.

14 In terms of coping effectiveness, we found that distraction- and disengagement-
15 oriented dispositional coping were negatively associated with how the athletes felt they were
16 handling stress in their life, whereas dispositional task-oriented coping was associated with
17 the female athletes coping more effectively. This finding in itself is not a unique finding, as
18 previous research has suggested that situational forms of distraction- and disengagement-
19 oriented coping are associated with athletes not coping as effectively (Gaudreau et al., 2010;
20 Nicholls, Polman, Levy, & Borkoles, 2010). Interestingly, we found that peer influence on
21 behavior maturity may indirectly reduce coping effectiveness, through the coping strategies
22 employed by an athlete. That is, an athlete's coping may be inhibited by peer distractions,
23 which in turn results in him or her coping less effectively. Alternatively, it is also plausible
24 that athletes may observe their peers coping in a particular manner, such as giving up and
25 distracting themselves from the task at hand, and that these ineffective forms of coping may

1 be socially reinforced, especially in team environments. Tamminen and Holt (2012) did not
2 identify peers as sources that might influence coping, but this study appears they may play a
3 crucial role. Future research could explore the relationship between peer influence and coping
4 in more detail.

5 In order to improve coping effectiveness, sport psychologists and coaches could take
6 a two-pronged approach. Athletes, especially female athletes, could be taught to use task-
7 oriented coping strategies, which have been highlighted in previous research (Gaudreau et al.,
8 2010). Secondly, efforts can be made to foster a motivational mastery climate in which
9 athletes are encouraged to focus on themselves and the level of improvement and effort they
10 make (e.g., Theeboom, De Knop, & Weiss, 1995). By doing this, adolescent athletes and
11 especially those who are more immature, may be less concerned and therefore less influenced
12 by their peers. Research could explore the effects of creating a motivational mastery climate
13 upon peer influence on behavior among adolescents. Furthermore, having previously
14 established the link between biological maturity and coping (e.g., Nicholls et al., 2009) and
15 now cognitive social maturity and dispositional coping, it would be interesting to explore the
16 relationship between emotional maturity and coping. Researchers could then examine the
17 extent to which each of these three types of maturity influence coping and the relationships
18 between them.

19 A limitation of this research relates to the cross-sectional approach that we adopted. It
20 would be useful to track coping at the micro- and macro-level over time in relation to an
21 athlete's cognitive social maturity and assess how this changes. However, this would be very
22 time consuming and expensive. Furthermore, Compas et al. (2001) stated that coping is
23 related to both cognitive and social maturity, whereas we measured cognitive social maturity
24 in the present study, which reflects elements of both cognitive and social maturity.
25 Additionally, we measured coping from a dispositional rather than a situational perspective,

1 although some support for dispositional coping has been found in the sport literature. For
2 example, Louvet et al. (2007) reported some coping consistency across competitions, as did
3 Nicholls (2007) with a sample of international adolescent golfers. Additional evidence
4 regarding the influence of maturity on whether athletes cope in a consistent manner is
5 warranted and would shed additional light on coping among adolescents.

6 In the present study that we examined coping among adolescents who were aged
7 between 11 and 18 years of age to assess if there were maturational differences. However,
8 this did not allow us to explore when the changes occurred, so future research could focus on
9 specific age groups within adolescence to identify the transitional periods (Skinner &
10 Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Furthermore, little is known about how people evaluate or appraise
11 stress in relation to maturation. Research indicates that appraisal is a key variable that is
12 associated with coping among athletes (Nicholls, Polman, & Levy, 2012), so one could
13 assume that appraisal is also influenced by maturity, but research is required to establish this
14 research.

15 With regards to future scholarly activity that assesses cognitive social maturation
16 among adolescents, further work could examine the factorial structure of the CSMQ (Levers-
17 Landis et al., 2006), with a large sample, given the low Cronbach alphas reported by Levers-
18 Landis et al. In the present study, we assessed the reliability of the CSMQ via composite
19 reliability and found it was more reliable than Lever-Landis et al., but caution is warranted
20 before using this scale in other research before adequate testing.

21 In conclusion, this study supports for Compas et al.'s (2001) finding that coping is
22 related to maturity. The way adolescent athletes cope and how effective their coping is,
23 appears related to their level of cognitive social maturity. In order to circumvent the negative
24 effects of peer influence on behavior among adolescents, coaches and psychologists can
25 develop motivational mastery climates and teach task-oriented coping strategies.

1 **References**

- 2 Amiot, C. E., Gaudreau, P., & Blanchard, C. M. (2004). Self-determination, coping, and goal
3 attainment in sport. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 26*, 396-411. Retrieved
4 from <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/jsep>
- 5 Anshel, M. H., & Anderson, D.L. (2002). Coping with acute stress in sport: Linking athletes
6 coping style, coping strategies, affect, and motor performance. *Anxiety, Stress and*
7 *Coping, 15*, 193-209. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gasc20>
- 8 Bartley, C. E., & Roesch, S. C. (2011). Coping with daily stress: The role of
9 conscientiousness. *Personality and Individual Differences, 50*, 79-83.
10 doi:10.1016/j.paid.2010.08.027
- 11 Boekaerts, M. (1996). Coping with stress in childhood and adolescence. In M. Zeidner &
12 N.S. Endler (Eds.), *Handbook of coping: Theory research and applications* (pp. 452–
13 484). New York: Wiley.
- 14 Compas, B.E., Connor-Smith, J.K., Saltzman, H., Harding Thomsen, A., & Wadsworth, M.E.
15 (2001). Coping with stress during childhood and adolescence: Problems, progress, and
16 potential in theory and research. *Psychological Bulletin, 127*, 87–127.
17 doi:10.1037//0033-2909.127.1.87
- 18 Conradt, M., Dierk, J-M., Schlumberger, P., Rauh, E., Heberbrand, J., & Rief, W. (2008).
19 Who copes well? Obesity-related coping and its associations with shame, guilt, and
20 weight loss. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 64*, 1129-1144. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20501
- 21 Gaudreau, P., Nicholls, A. R., & Levy, A. R. (2010). The ups and downs of sports
22 performance: An episodic process analysis of within-person associations. *Journal of*
23 *Sport & Exercise Psychology, 32*, 298-311. Retrieved from
24 <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/jsep>

- 1 Giacobbi Jr, P.R., & Weinberg, R.S. (2000). An examination of coping in sports: Individual
2 trait anxiety differences and situational consistency. *The Sport Psychologist, 14*, 42-62.
3 Retrieved from <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/tsp>
- 4 Gottlieb, B. H., & Rooney, J. A. (2004). Coping effectiveness: Determinants and relevance to
5 the mental health and affect of family caregivers of persons with dementia. *Aging and*
6 *Mental Health, 8*, 364-373. doi:10.1080/13607860410001709719
- 7 Hayes, A. F. (2009). Beyond Baron and Kenny: Statistical mediation analysis in the new
8 millennium. *Communication Monographs, 76*, 408-420.
9 doi:10.1080/03637750903310360
- 10 Held, P., Owens, G. P., Schumm, J. A., & Chard, K. M. (2011). Disengagement coping as a
11 mediator between trauma-related guilt and PTSD severity. *Journal of Traumatic Stress,*
12 *24*, 708-715. doi: 10.1002/jts.20689
- 13 Hopwood, C.J. & Donnellan, M.B. (2010). How should the internal structure of personality
14 inventories be evaluated? *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14*, 332-346.
15 doi:10.1177/1088868310361240
- 16 Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure
17 analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling,*
18 *6*, 1-55. doi:10.1080/10705519909540118
- 19 Hurst, J. F., Thompson, A., Visek, A. J., Fisher, B., & Gaudreau, P. (2011). Towards a
20 dispositional version of the Coping Inventory for Competitive Sport. *International*
21 *Journal of Sport Psychology, 42*, 167-185. Retrieved from <http://www.ijsp-online.com/>
- 22 Iacobucci, D., Saldanha, N., & Deng, X. (2007). A meditation on mediation: Evidence that
23 structural equation models perform better than regressions. *Journal of Consumer*
24 *Psychology, 17*, 140-154. doi: 10.1016/S1057-7408(07)70020-7.

- 1 Kaiseler, M. H., Polman, R. C. J., & Nicholls, A. R. (2011). Effects of the Big Five
2 personality dimensions on appraisal, coping, and coping effectiveness in sport.
3 *European Journal of Sport Science, 12*, 62-72. doi: 10.1080/17461391.2010.551410
- 4 Kristiansen, E., & Roberts, G. C. (2010). Young elite athletes and social support: coping with
5 competitive and organizational stress in “Olympic” competition. *Scandinavian*
6 *Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports, 20*, 686-695.
7 doi: 10.1111/j.1600-0838.2009.00950.x
- 8 LaFontana, K. M., & Cillessen, A. H. N. (2010). Perceived status in childhood and
9 adolescence. *Social Development, 19*, 130-147. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9507.2008.00522.x
- 10 Lazarus, R.S. (1999). *Stress and emotion: A new synthesis*. New York: Springer.
- 11 Lazarus, R.S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping*. New York: Springer.
- 12 Louvet, B., Gaudreau, P., Menaut, A., Genty, J., & Deneuve, P. (2007). Longitudinal patterns
13 of stability and change in coping across three competitions: A latent class growth
14 analysis. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 29*, 100-117. Retrieved from
15 <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/jsep>
- 16 McCrae, R. R., & John, O. P. (1992). An introduction to the five-factor model and its
17 applications. *Journal of Personality, 60*, 175–215. doi 10.1111/j.1467-
18 6494.1992.tb00970.x
- 19 Marsh, H. W., Hau, K.-T., & Wen, Z. (2004). In search of golden rules: Comment on
20 hypothesis testing approaches to setting cutoff values for fit indexes and dangers in
21 overgeneralising Hu & Bentler’s (1999) findings. *Structural Equation Modeling, 11*,
22 320–341. doi:10.1207/s15328007sem1103_2

- 1 Nevitt, J., & Hancock, G. R. (2001). Performance of bootstrapping approaches to model test
2 statistics and parameter standard error estimation in structural equation modeling.
3 *Structural Equation Modeling*, 8, 353-377. doi:10.1207/S15328007SEM0803_2
- 4 Nicholls, A. R. (2007). A longitudinal phenomenological analysis of coping effectiveness
5 among Scottish international adolescent golfers. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 7,
6 169-178. doi: 10.1080/17461390701643034
- 7 Nicholls, A. R., Holt, N. L., & Polman, R. C. J. (2005). A phenomenological analysis of
8 coping effectiveness in golf. *The Sport Psychologist*, 19, 111-130. Retrieved from
9 <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/tsp>
- 10 Nicholls, A. R., Holt, N. L., Polman, R. C. J., & Bloomfield, J. (2006). Stressors, coping, and
11 coping effectiveness among professional rugby union players. *The Sport Psychologist*,
12 20, 314-329. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/tsp>
- 13 Nicholls, A. R., Levy, A. R., & Polman, R. C. J. (2012). A path analysis of stress appraisals,
14 emotions, coping, and performance satisfaction among athletes. *Psychology of Sport*
15 *and Exercise*, 13, 263-270. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2011.12.003
- 16 Nicholls, A. R., & Polman, R. C. J. (2007). Coping in sport: a systematic review. *Journal of*
17 *Sports Sciences*, 25, 11-31. doi:10.1080/02640410600630654.
- 18 Nicholls, A. R., Polman, R. C. J., Levy, A. R., & Borkoles, E. (2010). The mediating role of
19 coping: A cross-sectional analysis of the relationship between coping self-efficacy and
20 coping effectiveness among athletes. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 17,
21 181-192. doi: 10.1037/a0020064
- 22 Nicholls, A. R., Polman, R. C. J., Morley, D., & Taylor, N. (2009). Coping and coping
23 effectiveness in relation to a competitive sport event: Pubertal status, chronological age,
24 and gender among adolescent athletes. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 31,
25 299-317. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/jsep>

- 1 Sagar, S. S., Lavallee, D., & Spray, C. M. (2007). Why young elite athletes fear failure:
2 Consequences of failure. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *25*, 1171–1184.
3 doi:10.1080/02640410601040093
- 4 Reeves, C. W., Nicholls, A. R., & McKenna, J. (2009). Stressors and coping strategies
5 among early and middle adolescent premier league academy soccer players: differences
6 according to age. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *21*, 31-48.
7 doi:10.1080/10413200802443768.
- 8 Skinner, E. A., & Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (2007). The development of coping. *Annual*
9 *Review of Psychology*, *58*, 119-144. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085705
- 10 Tabachnick, B.G., & Fidell, L.S. (2001). *Using Multivariate Statistics (4th ed.)*. Boston,
11 MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- 12
13 Tamminen, K. A., & Holt, N. L. (2010). A meta-study of qualitative research examining
14 stressor appraisals and coping among adolescents in sport. *Journal of Sports Sciences*,
15 *28*, 1563-1580. doi:10.1080/02640414.2010.512642.
- 16 Tamminen, K. A., & Holt, N. L. (2012). Adolescent athletes' learning about coping and the
17 roles of parents and coaches. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *13*, 69-79. doi:
18 10.1016/j.psychsport.2011.07.006
- 19 Theeboom, M., De Knop, P., & Weiss, M. R. (1995). Motivational climate, psychological
20 responses, and motor skill development in children's sport: A field-based intervention
21 study. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, *17*, 294–311. Retrieved from:
22 <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/jsep>
- 23 Weiss, M.R., & Bredemeier, B.J. (1983). Developmental sport psychology: A theoretical
24 perspective for studying children in sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, *5*, 216–230.
25 Retrieved from <http://www.journals.humankinetics.com/jsep>

- 1 Willams, K., & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, A. (1999). Coping strategies in adolescents. *Journal*
- 2 *of Applied Developmental Psychology, 20, 537-549.*
- 3 doi:10.1016/S01933973(99)00025-8

1 Table 1

2 *Descriptive Statistics for Cognitive Social Maturity, Dispositional Coping, and Coping Effectiveness*

3

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	4
1. Task oriented coping	3.25	.68	(.89)							5
2. Distraction oriented coping	2.11	.82	.04	(.73)						6
3. Disengagement oriented coping	2.23	.67	.00	.33**	(.65)					7
4. Coping Effectiveness	2.85	.57	.02	-.28**	-.37**	(.66)				8
5. Conscientiousness	3.13	.54	.24**	-.06	-.26**	.14*	(.71)			9
6. Rule Following	2.66	.74	.07	-.27**	-.23**	.24**	.22**	(.81)		10
7. Peer Influence on behavior	2.25	.68	.07	.11	-.21**	.05	.24**	.17**	(.79)	11

12 *Note.* * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Composite reliability shown in parenthesis.

13

1 Table 2

2 *Direct, Indirect and Total Effects*

	Direct Effect Estimate	Indirect Effect Estimate	Total Effect Estimate
Conscientiousness → Coping Effectiveness	.04	.08	.10
Peer Influence on Behavior → Coping Effectiveness	.14	.10*	.24*
Rule Following → Coping Effectiveness	.01	.00	.01

3

4 *Note. *p < .01*

5

1 Table 3

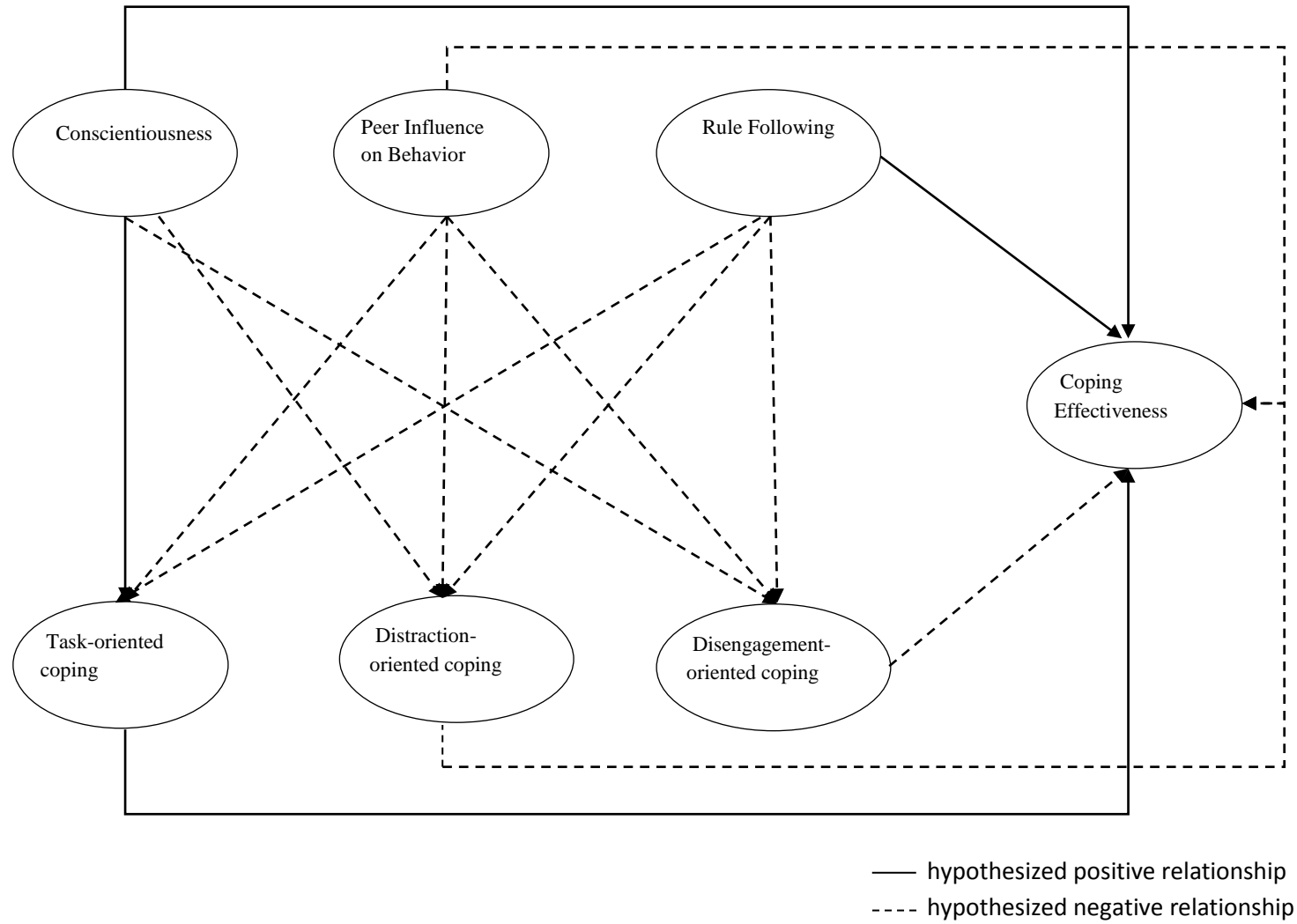
2 *Fit Statistics from Combined Effects and Meditational Structural Equation Models*

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA (90% CI)
1. Combined Effects Model	55.0	37	1.49	.97	.95	.04	.05 (.02-.07)
2. Mediation Model	60.1	40	1.50	.97	.95	.04	.05 (.02-.07)

3

1 Figure 1 Hypothesized model

2



3

1 Figure 2 Mediation Model for Cognitive Social Maturity, Coping, and Coping Effectiveness

