

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN REGULATORY FOCUS, HASSLES, AND  
PERCEIVED STRESS LEVELS IN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Regulatory Focus Theory is a motivation orientation theory that states that the types of goals an individual will set depends on their regulatory focus. Individuals with a prevention-oriented focus are more likely to set goals that focus on fulfilling obligations and maintaining one's security. Those with a more promotion-oriented focus are likely to set goals related to meeting aspirations or aspiring to be the best that they can be. Previous studies observing individual's regulatory focus have observed the relationships between regulatory foci and work performance, psychological and physiological stress, and creativity and challenge stressors. Results of this study support previous studies' claims that regulatory foci are related to stress. It was also found that there are individuals who express both regulatory foci, and there are significant differences in the number of hassles experienced, the severity of those hassles, and amount of stress perceived depending on the levels of regulatory foci. Future research in this area could observe the possible relationships between regulatory foci and parenting styles or context-framing of goals.



## I. INTRODUCTION

Individuals have different aspirations they want to achieve during their lifetime. To achieve those aspirations, goals are set. Goals are the metaphorical stepping stones that make up portions of one's milestones. The types of goals vary among individuals, depending on their expectations for themselves. For example, some types of aspirations people might set may be concerned with becoming the best version of themselves; others are more concerned with making sure they are fulfilling their responsibilities. The types of goals set by an individual are guided by their regulatory focus. Regulatory focus is an individual's motivational tendency that influences how individuals perceive their environment, what types of goals they set, and how they go about reaching those goals (Higgins, 2000). Regulatory focus can be persistent and lifelong or induced, or temporary and short-term. Prevention focus is focused on maintaining security and fulfilling responsibilities; promotion focus is fixated on personal growth (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). These foci may also influence how different types of stressors are perceived. Every goal comes with demands, or stressors, that an individual must meet and overcome.

Everyone experiences stress; nevertheless, the perceptions and experiences of that stress varies among individuals. I am interested in two types of stress: hassles and perceived stress, which will be described in more detail in the literature review.

Regulatory focus may affect how those stressors are appraised.

### **Current Study**

This study sought to answer questions about regulatory foci and their relationship to stress. Specifically, this study will examine the relationships between regulatory focus and its links with the appraisal of hassles and the amount of stress perceived. Although

there have been studies that have examined regulatory focus or stress in their models (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 2000, 2005; Roney, Higgins & Shah, 1997), there has been little research on the relationship between regulatory focus, hassle evaluation, and perceived stress. I propose to examine the relationship between individuals' regulatory focus, the types of hassles they encounter and how each type is evaluated, and the amount of perceived stress experienced. There are many events and elements that can be considered stressful for college students.

## **Literature Review**

### ***A Brief History and Definition of Stress***

Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.) defines stress as a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension that may be related to the development of health problems; and defines hassles as a minor annoyance. Stress can be acute, or short-term or chronic, or long-term. Acute stress is the result of everyday hassles. Some examples of hassles are housework (chores), not getting enough rest, and traffic. Chronic stress is the result of major life events such as marriage or divorce, losing a close relative or friend. Positive stress is also called eustress; negative stress is can also be called distress. Eustress results in slight anxiety or arousal from a challenging event that a person knows they can overcome. An example of an event that would result in eustress is public speaking. Distress activates the physiological stress response. An example of an event that would result in distress is losing a job. There are several theories of the stress response.

Hans Selye's theory of systemic stress (1976) was one of the first theories of the stress response, a condition that is expressed in the form of physiological changes in

which each stressor results in the same generic response. This expression occurs in three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. Alarm is the “fight or flight” response which is the activation of the sympathetic nervous system. It causes a state of slight arousal and sharpened awareness. During this short-lived state, one can make a very quick decision about whether to confront or escape from a stressful situation. The resistance stage is a state of prolonged arousal. In this state, hormone levels remain at higher levels than normal. The exhaustion stage is the total consumption of energy reserves. In this stage, an individual’s resources are used up and can result in severe physiological damage or even death.

Lazarus and Folkman’s transactional theory of stress (1984) is a more recent study of stress that is still used today. This theory interprets stress as an experience that results from a “transaction” between an individual and their environment. This is different from Selye’s definition of stress as a universal response pattern to a stimulus. The experience is manifested in two stages: appraisal and coping. The appraisal stage is the evaluation of the current environment or situation and has two substages: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal.

Primary appraisal is an evaluation of how the environment or situation affects an individual’s welfare. Secondary appraisal is the judgement of what an individual can do to manage or mitigate the stressful situation. The coping stage is how the individual chooses to deal with the stress, which varies among individuals. The theory also categorizes how three types of stressful events are appraised: threats, harm, and challenges. Threatening stressors are perceived as expected or impending dangers. Harmful stress is perceived as damage already done. Challenges are events that an

individual judges they can overcome because they have an adequate number of resources. Threats and harm can be categorized as distress, whereas challenges can be labeled as eustress.

Stress can be measured physiologically or psychologically. Physiological measurements include heart rate, blood pressure, or salivary cortisol levels. Psychological measures of stress are self-reported from participants on stress scales. For my study, I will be collecting data using a self-report measure of perceived stress.

### ***Perceived Stress***

Perceived stress is defined as the feeling of how overwhelmed an individual may be at any moment. The appraisal stage of Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress defines the perception of stress. Deckro and colleagues (2002) measured the effects of an intervention program on perceived stress in college students. The intervention program lasted about a month and a half and consisted of different activities including programs in mindfulness and yoga sessions (Deckro et al., 2002). Before and after the experiment, an inventory of demographic information, anxiety, stress levels, and daily habits was taken for each participant. Results of this study showed that participants assigned to the experimental group reported significantly lower levels of stress after completing the intervention program compared to the control group (Deckro et al., 2002). Other research has observed students' behaviors without an intervention.

Does choosing to participate in self-care activities such as yoga and mindfulness with different goals in mind, whether for recreation or decreasing stress, relate to the nature of the stress experience? Nguyen-Michel et al. (2006) investigated the relationship between exercise habits and perceived stress levels in college students. Nguyen-Michel

and colleagues asked participants to fill out a survey measuring perceived stress levels and exercise habits. The results of this study showed a significant negative correlation between participant's perceived stress and amount of weekly exercise (Nguyen-Michel et al., 2006). In other words, students who exercised more during the week reported lower stress levels. If regulatory focus was measured, a promotion regulatory focus may have played a role in students who exercised and reported lower stress.

Many studies have also been conducted implementing the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) as a measure of perceived stress (Ballantyne et al., 2021; Hintz et al., 2015; May & Casazza, 2012; Maybery & Graham, 2001; Saleh et al., 2018). Others have tested the reliability of the 10-item version of the scale; Roberti et al. (2006) administered the PSS to students attending 3 southwestern universities in the United States and found the scale to be highly reliable ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ; Roberti et al., 2006). This scale has been shown to be an accurate measure for perceived stress and will be used in this study to observe its possible relationship with regulatory focus and hassle appraisal. The goals people set and the way they go about pursuing them are influenced by regulatory focus, which will be defined and explained in the next few paragraphs.

### ***Regulatory Focus***

There are two types of regulatory focus: prevention focus and promotion focus. The concept of regulatory focus theory was created by Tory Higgins (1997). Regulatory focus theory is a motivational tendency theory, meaning an individual's regulatory focus predisposes them to be motivated by certain situations, which influences the types of goals people set for themselves and how they achieve those goals. Most of Higgins' work was done on people's motivations and how their regulatory focus influenced their

motivations, goal achievement, and coping methods used in response to workplace stressors. He found that people who had a promotion-related focus were more likely to take risks to reach their goals, while those with a more prevention-related focus were more vigilant and meticulous about their achievements (Higgins, 2002). Crowe and Higgins (1997) and Higgins (2002) defined prevention focus as concern with preventing negative consequences, sustaining their security, and making sure responsibilities were being fulfilled; promotion focus was defined as concern with personal and social improvements.

Applying this to college students, a college student with a prevention focus is likely to have goals of getting good grades while making a minimal number of mistakes and taking little to no risk. To avoid being set back, that student will be more prone to follow assignment guidelines in rubrics more closely to produce higher quality work, study harder to ensure they understand course material, maintain attendance in class, and ask questions when something is unclear. By contrast, promotion focus is defined as concern with personal gains and accomplishments (Higgins, 2002). A college student with a promotion focus will have goals of becoming well-liked (personal-social), achieving success (personal), and taking risks if they deem necessary. For example, a student with a promotion focus may engage in the following: focus on starting and maintaining relationships with their peers and/or professors, stray from the rubric, and take more creative liberties to complete a project they enjoy (risking their grade if they don't follow instructions).

### ***Possible Links between Regulatory Focus and Stress***

As previously mentioned, regulatory focus is a mental state that influences the types and pursuit of goals set. Prevention focus is related to the avoidance of negative outcomes, and promotion is related to the encouragement of positive outcomes. Hassles are minor everyday occurrences (i.e., acute stressors). Perceived stress is a feeling of being overwhelmed that may be influenced by a person's mindset and regulatory focus. There has not been any previous research published on the relationship between regulatory focus, hassle assessment, and perceived stress levels in college students specifically. However, there has been research observing the relationships between regulatory focus and perceived stress in non-college students.

The following studies lay the foundation for my study. Molden et al. (2008) proposed a model that linked each of the regulatory foci with a positive and negative end of a continuum of emotion (i.e., a feeling of concern and contentment). Prevention focus was associated with feelings of nervousness and tranquility and a promotion focus with feelings of exhilaration and melancholy (Molden et al., 2008). My first research question is based off this model. I expanded on this from simply involving regulatory focus and stress to also include hassle evaluation. For example, this model could be applied to how university students appraise hassles and perceive the stress associated with their goal of passing a class. A student with a promotion focus will internalize the fulfillment as a success, resulting in feelings of joy. A student with prevention focus will internalize passing the class as avoiding failure, resulting in feelings of calm. The internalizations, framed differently because of the state of regulatory focus, result in different emotional states. Again, concern with the presence or absence of positive outcomes is characteristic

of promotion focus, and concern with the presence or absence of negative outcomes is representative of prevention focus. These findings suggest that the way people respond emotionally (i.e., joy, calmness) to outcomes and demands may depend on their regulatory focus or foci.

Students face different types of challenges from class workload to relationship maintenance. Emotional responses to these demands or stressors (calmness, joy, anxiety, fear) may depend on their regulatory tendencies. Having to keep up with schoolwork, social norms and responsibilities, interpersonal relationships, in some cases finances, along with other demands affects stress levels in students (Bakhtiari et al., 2018; Barker et al., 2018; Besser & Zeigler-Hill, 2012). The perception of stress varies among individuals depending on their disposition and other factors. Some students may experience more *extreme* or *intense* changes compared to others. For example, some students may live away from home for the first time, are first-generation students, pay for their education on their own or may manage one or multiple jobs while earning their degree.

Those are just a few examples of more demanding situations that may cause students to approach different management strategies, with some engaging in a promotion-focused approach while others are using a prevention-focused strategy. For instance, students with a prevention regulatory focus will be more likely to want to prepare to avoid failure (negative consequence), but those with a promotion focus will want to expend more effort to attain success (positive consequence). These goals seem similar, but the concentration is on the framing of the event. Preparedness or



accomplishments may help buffer the effects of stress. The following studies observed the possible relationship between regulatory focus and stress.

A study conducted by Byron et al. (2018) observed various interactions between participant's regulatory focus and stressors on job performance; they hypothesized that high levels of challenge or hindrance stressors may moderate the relationship between an individual's regulatory focus and their job performance. The Challenge-Hindrance Stressor Framework (CHSF) was used as the basis for their hypotheses. The CHSF states that there are two types of stressors: challenges and hindrances. Challenges were defined as workload, deadlines, and long work hours. These stressors are usually evaluated as being manageable opportunities for self-improvement and linked to positive outcomes; individuals higher on promotion focus may more successfully manage these demands in a work environment (Byron et al., 2018). Hindrances were defined such as job insecurity, role ambiguity, lack of career progress or other events that are associated with uncertain or negative outcomes; individuals higher on prevention focus may be more successful in coping with these types of stressors in a work environment (Byron et al., 2018).

The researchers obtained demographic information and measured regulatory focus and perceived stress using an online survey. Data about the job performance were collected from the participants' managers rating their work performance, which consisted of a combination of their overall performance and quota met. Results of the study revealed that in the high challenge stress condition, promotion focus was positively related to job performance; they also found that promotion focus was negatively related to hindrance stress. In other words, challenge stressors moderated the relationship between promotion focus and job performance and participants were more motivated to

do well at their task. Prevention focus was positively associated with job performance when hindrance stressors were high; hindrance stressors moderated the relationship between prevention focus and job performance and participants were more motivated to do well at their task (Byron et al., 2018).

Another study conducted by Hauser et al. (2018) looked at relationships between regulatory focus and work–life enrichment (WLE) and work-life conflict (WLC) in two studies. The Work-Home Resources Model is used to explain the agreement between personal dimensions based on the amounts of personal resources an individual has. The agreement is the balance between the number of available resources an individual has and demands (dimensions) they interact with; interacting within stressful environments uses up personal resources. The two dimensions are home and work. The concept of WLE is defined as an agreement based on an adequate number of personal resources, meaning an individual has enough resources to spare to mitigate stressful situations; WLC is defined as a disagreement because of limited personal resources, meaning the individual does not have the appropriate number of resources to temper stressful situations. A positive relationship was found between WLE and promotion focus in both studies; a positive relationship was found between WLC and prevention focus in their first study; this means that the higher an individual scored on prevention focus, the higher the rating of WLC (Hauser et al., 2018). They also found that women reported experiencing more WLC than men. These results support my first hypothesis that there is possibly a connection between regulatory focus and perceived stress.

Parker et al. (2014) conducted a study on the relationships between regulatory focus, physiological stress, psychological stress, and performance on a task that consisted

of answering emails in a work simulation. The physiological measure of stress was fluctuations in heart rate by an electrocardiogram (ECG) and was measured throughout the study. More fluctuations were observed to be associated with less stress, but it was uncertain whether less fluctuations in heart rate were associated with more, or less, psychological stress. It was measured to observe the participant's adjustments to the task and compare to the self-reports for perceived stress. The psychological measures of stress were self-reports to questionnaires on anxiety and dissatisfaction with the task and was measured after each trial. There were three conditions for the task: high task control, neutral task control, and low task control. The task consisted of participants assuming the role of HR supervisor and responding to five employee emails in 10 minutes. Task control manipulation was the instruction in the amount of freedom the participants had (for work pace and order of answering emails) during the task. In the high task control condition, participants were told to answer the emails at the pace and in the order they pleased. In the neutral condition, participants played either Solitaire or Minesweeper while waiting for emails to populate their inbox. In the low task control condition, participants were given stern instructions to answer emails sequentially and consistently. Hierarchical moderated regressions were conducted for each independent variable of this study and revealed that in between trials 1 and 2, participants in the high task control condition, participants with high promotion focus had an increase in average words typed per email; in other words, they were more productive and less stressed in the second trial. Participants with a higher prevention focus in the same condition reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with the task (more stressful); those with prevention focus reported being more dissatisfied with a lax environment. Prevention-oriented individuals in the

low task control condition reported lower levels of dissatisfaction with the task (Parker et al., 2014). Individuals with prevention focus reported being more satisfied and less stressed with a stricter or more demanding environment. The scores of individuals with both prevention and promotion foci were also analyzed.

In high task control condition, individuals with a higher promotion focus reported the higher satisfaction (less psychological stress) and more fluctuations in heart rate (less physiological stress). The opposite was found in individuals with high prevention focus; they reported higher dissatisfaction (more psychological stress) and less fluctuations in heart rate (possibly more physiological stress). In the low control task condition, individuals with high prevention focus reported higher levels of satisfaction (less psychological stress). Individuals with low promotion scores and high prevention focus in the low control task condition had an increase in heart rate fluctuations between trials (Parker et al., 2014). These results support the idea that higher promotion focus is related to less perceived stress (in the lax condition); prevention focus is positively related to more stress (in a less demanding environment).

Two studies conducted by Sacramento et al. (2013) observed regulatory focus, creativity, and challenge stressors. As a reminder, a challenge stressor is evaluated as an obstacle that can be overcome that's usually associated with personal development (i.e., positive gain). The framing of the introduction of the challenge stressors was manipulated, and participants were assigned to one of two groups: high vs. low work demands. The relationship between these variables was measured on the individual level in the first study, and on a group level in the second study. Participants were asked to complete several tasks that measured their creativity: The Gestalt Completion Task

(GCT), the Snowy Pictures Test (SPT), the Unusual Uses Test (UUT), and a word identification Task (Sacramento et al., 2013). The GCT measures an individual's ability to reorganize fragments into the shapes of simple objects. The SPT required that participants view images and decipher the objects that appeared to be obscured by snow. In the UUT, participants had to come up with unique ways to use household objects outside of their intended use. In this study, each of the tasks had two conditions: high work demand and low work demand. In the high demand condition, participants were told that their responses would be analyzed and that it was important that they performed well on the task; in the low demand condition, participants were told to do the best they could (Sacramento et al., 2013). The high work demand condition induced a prevention focus in participants; the low work demand condition induced a promotion focus. In the second part of the first study, participants completed a word identification task and two tasks that measured creativity. The word identification task was administered to ensure that participants remained in the same condition they were assigned to in the first part of the study (Sacramento et al., 2013). Participants then attempted the creativity tasks. Results of this study revealed that when promotion focus was high, there was a positive correlation between creativity and work demands. In other words, promotion focus significantly moderates the relationship between work demands and creativity. This means that expressing a promotion-oriented focus influences how stressors (work demands) influence performance in creativity tasks. Having high promotion focus mitigated the effects of work demands (less stress) and allowed more resources to be allocated to generating ideas.

In the second study, Sacramento and colleagues (2013) conducted a similar study with teams. They measured regulatory focus, work demands, and creativity on individual and team levels. The team measures for each of the variables measured collective positions, as opposed to individual beliefs; age and education level were controlled for (Sacramento, Kay, & West, 2013). Participants were asked to do the same tasks as in the first study. The results were like those found in the original study. Both regulatory foci interacted with job demands on the individual level to predict creativity; team job demands interacted with promotion focus to predict creativity (Sacramento et al., 2013). This shows a possible relationship between promotion focus and perceived stress. There have been a few studies that support that there is a relationship between an individual's regulatory focus (or foci) and stress.

### **Hypotheses and Research Questions**

Thus, there have been studies examining the relationship between regulatory focus and stress, but none have tested the links between the two while including the assessment of hassles in university students. As previously mentioned, few studies have been conducted in the past that have observed the relationship between regulatory focus and perceived stress. I was curious about the appraisal of hassles since research in that area seemed scarce. I state the three research questions and advance the hypotheses below. Exploration of these questions and testing these hypotheses is important because they contribute knowledge to this field/topic of research.

1. Are promotion and prevention regulatory foci related to hassles and perceived stress?
2. Do individuals who express both prevention and promotion foci exist?

3. If individuals with both foci exist, do they experience stress differently than those who are promotion or prevention focused alone?

Regulatory focus, as I previously mentioned, influences how individuals interact with their environment such as the types of goals people set for themselves and how they go about accomplishing those goals. The goals that students choose to pursue and how they achieve them is determined by their regulatory focus (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). I will be testing whether the approaches students take to achieve their goals is associated with how they assess hassles and the stress they perceive. Is their regulatory focus linked with their perceived stress? Previous research has found that regulatory focus is related to perceived stress. Thus, for the first research question, I predict prevention regulatory focus will be positively related to both hassle frequency, hassle severity, and perceived stress, while promotion focus will be negatively related to the three.

Related to the second question, previous studies have found that there are individuals who reported having both types of regulatory focus. So, I predict that in the data I collect, there will be individuals who will report expressing both regulatory foci. The possibility of individuals expressing both foci may influence how they appraise stressors, which leads me to my next hypothesis.

Finally, for the third research question, I asked whether both types of regulatory focus explained the stress experience better in individuals than the prevention or promotion focus alone. Previous research has shown that individuals who reported having high promotion focus also reported experiencing less perceived stress, although the relationship was weak. Though it is possible to have a main regulatory focus, I am

interested in examining whether the expression of both prevention and promotion foci influence the amount of stress they perceive and how they assess hassles. I predict that both prevention and promotion foci together explain the stress experience with individuals, with those with high promotion focus and low prevention focus scores reporting the lowest stress, less hassles, and less hassle severity and those with high prevention focus and low promotion focus reporting the greatest stress, more hassles, and higher hassle severity.



## II. METHODOLOGY

### Participants

A total of 244 undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at Texas State University were recruited using the Texas State University SONA subject pool. Of those 244 students, 20.1% identified as Black or African American, 35.2% as Hispanic or Latin American, 5.7% as Asian, 34.4% as White, 1.2% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.4% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 2.9% as Other or Multiracial as seen in Table 1. In addition, 213 identified as women, 29 identified as men, and two individuals did not identify as male nor female. All participants received course credit for their Introduction to Psychology course and were thanked for their participation.

**Table 1.**  
*Participant Demographics*

Baseline Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
18-24	234	95.9
25-34	8	3.3
45-54	2	0.8
Gender		
Female	213	87.3
Male	29	11.9
Non-binary	1	0.4
Other	1	0.4
Ethnicity		
Black or African American	49	20.1
Hispanic or Latin American	86	35.2
Asian	14	5.7
White	84	34.4
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	1.2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.4
Other or Multiracial	7	2.9
Classification		

Freshman	130	53.3
Sophomore	74	30.3
Junior	26	10.7
Senior	14	5.7
<hr/>		
<i>N</i> = 244		

## Procedure

Three measures made up the survey and were distributed through Qualtrics through the Texas State SONA system. After they signed up for the study, participants had access to an anonymous link through the Texas State SONA system. Before starting the survey, students were asked to read a consent statement. Afterwards, the students were thanked for their time and automatically given credit. Most participants spent 10-25 minutes to complete the survey.

## Measures

The three scales that were included in the survey were the (1) the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire, (2) the Revised University Student Hassle Scale, and (3) the Perceived Stress Scale.

*Regulatory Focus Measure.* The Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ) created by Lockwood et al. (2002) assessed participants' regulatory focus. There are 18 items total and the scale ranges from 1 "*Not at all true of me*" to 9 "*Very true of me*." Nine of the items measured Prevention Focus, and nine measured Promotion Focus. Some examples of prevention focus items of this measure include "In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life" and "I am more oriented toward preventing losses than I am toward achieving gains." Some examples of promotion items are "In general, I am focused on achieving positive outcomes in my life" and "Overall, I am more oriented toward achieving success than preventing failure." The original reliabilities were fairly

high for both subscales:  $\alpha = .75$  for the prevention items and  $\alpha = .81$  for promotion items (Lockwood et al., 2002).

*Hassle Appraisal Measure.* To test hassle appraisal, Pett and Johnson's (2005) Revised University Student Hassles Scale (RUSH-S) measuring the occurrences and appraisal of hassles typically experienced by college students was administered. The RUSH-S is a 57-item scale that measures both frequency and severity of a hassle on a 5-point Likert scale: how many times the hassle occurred in the last month that ranged from 0 "Did not occur" to 4 "Always occurred", and how stressful the hassle usually is for the participant if it is experienced which ranged from 1 "Not at all severe" to 5 "Extremely severe." Examples of items of this measure include "Too many things to do," "Going out with friends," "Fear of losing valuables," and "Parents' expectations." Originally, Pett and Johnson (2005) found a high reliability for the entire scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

*Perceived Stress Measure.* The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen et al., 1983) was administered to assess general perceived stress. This 14-item scale measures how often individuals experience feelings and thoughts of stress on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 "Never" to 4 "Very Often." Some example items of this measure include "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?", "In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with day-to-day problems and annoyances?", and "In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?". The PSS psychometrics demonstrated a robust reliability in past research ( $\alpha = .80$ ; Cohen, et al., 1983).

### III. RESULTS

#### **Reliability Analyses**

Nine items on the RFQ and six items on the PSS scales were reverse scored before reliability analyses were run. Reliability analyses were run on the Prevention and Promotion focus-related subscales of the RFQ, the RUSH-S Hassle Frequency, and Severity subscales, and PSS scale items to assess their internal validity. The alphas for the Prevention focus and Promotion focus subscales were acceptable at  $\alpha = .695$  and  $\alpha = .852$ , respectively. RUSH-S items had high reliability for the Frequency ( $\alpha = .937$ ) and Severity ( $\alpha = .958$ ) subscales. The PSS items also showed robust internal validity ( $\alpha = .734$ ).

#### **Tests of the Hypotheses**

##### ***Correlational Analyses***

Correlation analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses that Prevention regulatory and Promotion regulatory foci were positively and negatively related, respectively, to Hassle Frequency, Hassle Severity and Perceived Stress. Analyses showed that there were significant relationships between Prevention Focus and average Hassle Frequency ( $r = .366, p < .01$ ), average Hassle Severity ( $r = .333, p < .01$ ), and Perceived Stress ( $r = .343, p < .01$ ). Only one relationship between Promotion Focus and Hassle Frequency was marginally significant ( $r = .123, p = .042$ ), but in the opposite direction than expected. No significant relationships between Promotion Focus and Hassle Severity ( $r = .045, p = .484$ ) or Perceived Stress ( $r = -.07, p = .277$ ) were found. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially confirmed (see Table 2).

**Table 2.**

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients for Prevention Focus, Promotion Focus, Average Perceived Stress, Average Hassle Frequency, and Average Hassle Severity*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Prevention Focus	45.33	13.38	–	.480**	.343**	.366**	.333**
2. Promotion Focus	51.97	17.49	.480**	–	-.068	.123*	.039
3. Perceived Stress	30.58	7.83	.343**	-.068	–	.506**	.605**
4. Hassle Frequency	2.71	0.57	.366**	.123*	.506**	–	.712**
5. Hassle Severity	2.11	0.52	.333**	.039	.605**	.712**	–

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$  level (2-tailed);  $N = 243$

### ***One-Way ANOVAs***

To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, I sought to find out if there were individuals who expressed having both Prevention and Promotion foci and if the combination of foci made a difference in the stress they experienced. The possibility of individuals expressing both foci may influence how they appraise stressors, and I predicted that those expressing high promotion and low prevention regulatory foci would experience and report the lowest stress and those with high prevention and low promotion foci would report the highest stress.

Scores for each of the RFQ subscales were separated into high or low groups using a median split. The median split scores for the Prevention Focus and Promotion Focus subscales were 43 and 48, respectively. Indeed, there were four groups of individuals that expressed combinations of the two foci. The four groups consisted of the following: High Prevention Focus & Promotion Focus ( $n = 91$ ; High/High group), High Prevention Focus & Low Promotion Focus ( $n = 38$ ; High/Low group), High Promotion Focus & Low Prevention Focus ( $n = 37$ ; Low/High group), and Low Prevention Focus, and Low Promotion Focus ( $n = 77$ ; Low/Low group). Median splits conducted on

regulatory focus showed that there were individuals who expressed having both regulatory foci. The second hypothesis was confirmed.

**Table 3.**

*Means, Standard Deviations, and One-Way ANOVAs for Regulatory Foci, Average Hassle Frequency, Average Hassle Severity, and Average Perceived Stress*

Measure	High Pre/Pro		High Pre/Low Pro		Low Pre/High Pro		Low Pre/Pro		$F(3, 242)$	$\eta^2$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$		
Hassle Frequency	2.85	0.53	2.94	0.38	2.64	0.56	2.47	0.61	9.616**	0.11
Hassle Severity	2.21	0.50	2.22	0.53	2.02	0.57	1.97	0.49	4.078*	0.05
Perceived Stress	31.51	7.65	35.00	6.21	26.51	8.86	29.27	7.02	9.391**	0.11

*Note.* Pre = Prevention Focus, Pro = Promotion Focus; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ;  $N = 243$

I proceeded to test Hypothesis 3 by examining the differences in Perceived Stress, Hassles Frequency and Hassles Severity among the four groups with three one-way ANOVAs. In the first ANOVA, significant differences in Hassle Frequency were found among groups:  $F(3,242) = 9.616, p < .001$  (see Table 3). Those experiencing the least Hassle Frequency were those in the Low Prevention Low Promotion group. In the second ANOVA, significant differences in Hassle Severity among groups were also found:  $F(3,242) = 4.078, p = .008$  (see Table 3). Again, the Low Prevention Low Promotion regulatory group reported the lowest Hassle Frequency least Hassle Severity. In the third ANOVA, significant differences in perceived stress among groups were also found:  $F(3, 242) = 9.391, p < .01$  (see Table 3). The group with the lowest reported Perceived Stress was the Low Prevention High Promotion regulatory group (see Table 3). I anticipated that those with Low Prevention High Promotion would report the lowest scores for each of the stress measures: hassle frequency, hassle severity, and perceived stress. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was partially confirmed with the median split and three One-Way ANOVA

analyses. I proceeded with three stepwise regression analyses to test this hypothesis further to determine how much variance each of the foci explained on each of the variables Hassles Frequency, Hassles Severity, and Perceived Stress.

### ***Regression Analyses***

Regression analyses were conducted to observe the possible contributions of each of the predictor variables, Prevention Focus and Promotion Focus, to the criterion variables, Hassle Frequency, Hassle Severity, and Perceived Stress. There were higher scores for Prevention Focus than Promotion Focus (see Table 4). For Hassle Frequency, the beta value for Prevention Focus was in the direction of my hypothesis ( $\beta = .366$ ,  $p < .001$ ; see Table 5). For Hassle Severity, beta coefficients for Prevention Focus ( $\beta = .409$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Promotion focus ( $\beta = -.158$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were also in the direction of my hypotheses (see Table 6). Finally, for Perceived Stress, the beta coefficients for Prevention Focus ( $\beta = .461$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Promotion Focus ( $\beta = -.342$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were also in the direction of my hypotheses (See Table 6). The interaction of Prevention and Promotion Focus was weak and insignificant ( $\beta = -.275$ ,  $p = .438$ ). The 13.4 % of variance in average Hassle Frequency scores can be attributed to Prevention Focus alone ( $R^2 = .134$ ,  $p < .001$ ; see Table 5). Regulatory foci were able to explain 17.8% of variance in responses for average Perceived Stress ( $R^2 = .178$ ,  $p < .001$ ; see Table 7). Prevention and Promotion regulatory foci were also able to explain 13% of variance in responses for average Hassle Severity ( $R^2 = .13$ ,  $p < .001$ ; see Table 6). These results for perceived stress showed that Prevention and Promotion foci together explain a significant proportion of the variance in Perceived Stress.

**Table 4.**

*Descriptive Statistics for Regulatory Foci, Average Hassle Frequency, Average Hassle Severity, and Average Perceived Stress*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Hassle Frequency	2.71	0.57
Hassle Severity	2.11	0.52
Perceived Stress	30.58	7.83
Prevention Focus	45.33	13.38
Promotion Focus	51.97	17.49
MC Promotion	0.00	13.38
MC Prevention	0.00	17.49
Interaction Term	111.88	228.89

*Note.* *N* = 243; MC = mean-centered

**Table 5.**

*Stepwise Regression of Associations between Regulatory Foci and Average Hassle Frequency*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	R Square Change	Unstandardized		Standardized	95% CI	
				<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	LL	UL
1. (Constant)	0.336	0.134	0.138	2.710**	0.034	–	2.643	2.776
Prevention Focus	–	–	–	0.016**	0.003	0.366**	0.011	0.021

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; \*\**p* < 0.01 level (2-tailed); *N* = 243

**Table 6.**

*Stepwise Regressions of Associations between Regulatory Foci and Average Hassle Severity*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	R Square Change	Unstandardized		Standardized	95% CI	
				<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	LL	UL
1. (Constant)	0.333	0.111	0.111	2.108**	0.032	–	2.045	2.17
Prevention Focus	–	–	–	0.013**	0.002	0.333**	0.008	0.018
2. (Constant)	0.361	0.13	0.019	2.108**	0.031	–	2.046	2.17
Prevention Focus	–	–	–	0.016*	0.003	0.409**	0.011	0.021
Promotion Focus	–	–	–	-0.005	0.002	-0.158*	-0.009	-0.001

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < 0.01 level (2-tailed); *N* = 243



**Table 7.**

*Stepwise Regressions of Associations between Regulatory Foci and Average Perceived Stress*

Model	R	$R^2$	R Square Change	Unstandardized		Standardized	95% CI	
				<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	LL	UL
1. (Constant)	0.297	0.088	0.088	30.584**	0.481	—	29.638	31.531
Prevention Focus	—	—	—	0.174**	0.036	0.297**	0.103	0.245
2. (Constant)	0.422	0.178	0.09	30.584**	0.457	—	29.684	31.485
Prevention Focus	—	—	—	0.27**	0.039	0.461**	0.193	0.347
Promotion Focus	—	—	—	-0.153**	0.03	-0.342**	-0.212	-0.094

*Note.* CI = confidence interval; \*\* $p < 0.01$  level (2-tailed);  $N = 243$

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The study's findings showed that individuals with Higher Prevention Focus reported experiencing more Hassles, Higher Hassle Severity, and more Perceived Stress. The ANOVAS also showed that the High Prevention regulatory focus regardless of their Promotion Focus levels reported experiencing the greatest amount of stress. One possible interpretation as to why those with higher Prevention Focus showed stronger stress responses is that only negative stressors were measured. Sassenrath and colleagues (2016) found that Prevention Focus scores were more related to hinderances, or negative stressors; Promotion Focus scores were more related to challenging, or positive stressors. The stronger the regulatory focus scores, the stronger the relationship with their respective stressor (Sassenrath et al., 2016).

The findings also revealed that Promotion regulatory focus was marginally and positively correlated with Hassles Frequency. I had predicted a negative relationship. The only finding that supported reduced stress among those with Promotion regulatory focus was in the ANOVA for Perceived Stress. Those with High Promotion Low Prevention reported the lowest Perceived stress, which lines up with results from previous research. The lowest scores for hassle frequency and severity were reported by individuals with Low Prevention Low Promotion scores. Nevertheless, the findings overall for Promotion Focus were weak. Previous research has shown that the relationship between promotion focus and perceived stress is weak (Hauser et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2014). As a reminder, perceived stress is the feeling of being overwhelmed, which is associated with a negative experience. The central focus around promotion focus is encouraging positive outcomes. Baumeister (2001) stated that negative events are more salient than positive

events. This might be another explanation as to why the relationship between Promotion Focus and Perceived Stress is weak.

Unexpected findings were that those with High Prevention regardless of their Promotion regulatory status reported the highest stress and those with the Lowest Promotion and Prevention regulatory status reported the least stress. One possible explanation for the findings is that the measures for stress were framed to be interpreted negatively. In other words, the items measured the amount and severity of minor annoyances (for hassles) or the feeling of being generally overwhelmed (for perceived stress). The concept of Prevention Focus revolves around avoiding negative outcomes and Promotion Focus revolves around encouraging positive outcomes. A higher prevention score may be a stronger indicator for being susceptible to higher levels of perceived stress on average, as found in the results of the stepwise regression for average perceived stress. Previous research suggests that individuals respond to different kinds of stressors as a function of their regulatory focus. Prevention scores were strongly related to perception of threatening stressors and weakly with challenging stressors while Promotion Focus scores were strongly correlated with the perception of challenge stressors and negatively with threat stressors. Stronger Prevention or Promotion scores had stronger relationships with either threatening or challenging stressors, respectively (Sassenrath et al., 2016). Thus, these findings may explain why individuals with Low Prevention Low Promotion scores reported experiencing the least amount of stress.

Additionally, the stepwise regression analyses showed the importance of considering the combination of both Prevention and Promotion foci in understanding the

stress experience of individuals. Prevention scores were shown to explain more variance in the responses for Hassle Frequency and Severity and Perceived Stress scores.

## **Limitations**

### ***Methodology***

This survey used in this study consisted of three different measures. The RUSH-S measure required two separate responses to measure Hassle Frequency and Severity. Separate measures that required a single response may have acquired more accurate results. The survey consisted of four multiple choice demographics questions. There were also four matrix-style questions: one that measured Prevention Focus and Promotion Focus, one for Hassle Frequency, one for Hassle Severity, and one for Perceived Stress scores. This style of question may have made it difficult for some participants to complete the survey.

### ***Timing of Data Collection***

Previous studies observed the relationship between regulatory focus and stress at the time of the study. In the current study, both scales measuring hassle assessment and perceived stress asked participants to recall information about hassles and perceived stress within the last month of them taking the survey. Recalling ratings of stress from the last month will be different from rating the stressors as they are occurring or right after experiencing them, which would be more accurate.

The timing of data collection could also have affected the results of the study. Data for the current study were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic between February 5<sup>th</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The pandemic has been very stressful, and the

lockdown put many things on hold for people; it could explain the average stress scores reported by participants. The Hassle Frequency may have been low because of the recommendation of social distancing, wearing masks, and reduced classroom capacity. People were permitted to be out if it was necessary, ordered social distancing (i.e., grocery shopping, medical appointments, or medical emergencies). COVID-19 may have affected the relationship between Promotion Focus and Hassle Frequency, Hassle Severity, and Perceived Stress. For example, individuals with a promotion focus may have framed the situation in terms of possible self-growth. They may not have perceived the hassles as being as stressful compared to individuals with a prevention focus, especially if they might not have experienced it due to the lockdown.

### **Future Directions**

There are other paths research could take with regulatory focus. One possible avenue of research could investigate how closely related parenting styles are to regulatory focus, or if parenting styles moderate the relationship between regulatory focus and perceived stress.

### ***Parenting Styles and Regulatory Focus***

Parenting styles influenced the development of these regulatory styles (Higgins & Silberman, 1998; Keller, 2008), and this may be the focus of a future study. Higgins and Silberman (1998) stated that one's primary regulatory focus is learned at a young age. They claim that the combination of the type of interaction between parent and child and the parent's intentions serve as messages that the parent wants to impart onto their children. The parent-child interactions are responses to desired states or undesired states. The "states" are defined as a child's behavior (desired), or misbehavior (undesired) and

parental responses can have either promotion-related or prevention-related intentions. Higgins and Silberman also outline two central message themes that parents communicate to their children: what the parent thinks the child *should* do and what the parent *wants* the child to do. The theme of the message depends on the parent's goals (promotion vs. prevention) and the child's behavior or misbehavior. They then gave examples of different types of interactions that influence the development of a child's regulatory focus. Children then adopt these regulatory foci, adjustment reflecting characteristics between an ought self or an ideal self (Higgins, 1998). The ought self is defined as what an individual *should* be like (prevention-focus related). The ideal self is defined as the *idyllic* type of person, what type of person an individual wants to be (promotion focus-related).

Parents with promotion-related goals (accomplishment of goals and fulfillment of aspirations) respond to positive (desired) behavior from children by encouraging and/or praising the child. This combination was defined as *bolstering* and the child's behaviors were rewarded or positively reinforced. In response to negative (undesired) behavior, promotion-oriented parents responded to negative (undesired) behavior from children by stopping or removing the positive reinforcement; an example given was the confiscation of toys. This combination was defined as *love withdrawal* and the child's behaviors were not punished. The message for promotion-oriented parents is what the parents *want* the child to do. These behaviors are characteristic of Baumrind's permissive parenting style (Baumrind, 1967).

Parents with prevention-related goals (promoting safety and fulfillment of responsibilities) will reinforce positive behavior by emphasizing its importance. An

example of this is teaching a child about manners or staying vigilant. This combination is defined as *prudent*, and the child's behavior is neither praised nor rewarded. Parents motivated by prevention-related goals responds to negative behavior by yelling at the child or criticizing when the child makes an error. This combination is defined as *critical* or *punitive* and the child's negative behavior is severely punished. The message for prevention-oriented parents is what the parents think the child *should* do. These parental behaviors are characteristic of Baumrind's authoritarian or authoritative parenting style (Baumrind, 1967).

Keller (2008) conducted a study observing the effects of parenting styles on adults' regulatory focus. Regulatory focus was measured using the Lockwood et al. scale (2002) and parenting styles were measured using a revised version of the parenting behavior questionnaire (PBQ; Hart et al., 1998). The parenting styles that are assessed in the PBQ scale are: active restrictive (authoritarian; critical/punitive response), active responsive (authoritative; bolstering response), and passive permissive (permissive). He found that parents with an active restrictive style resulted in their children developing a predominantly prevention-related focus; parents with an active responsive style were linked to their children developing a primarily promotion-related focus. Keller (2008) also found that the passive permissive parenting style was not related to their children developing a strong regulatory focus (Higgins & Silberman, 1998).

Higgins and Silberman (1998) mentioned that in extreme cases when children experience abuse, neglect, or even excess affection or pampering is more likely to result in that child not developing as strong a regulatory focus as children who have more consistent interactions with their parents or caregivers. Humans learn by watching others

interact and participating in said interactions with others. The learning begins at home through interactions with parents or caregivers and builds a foundation of knowledge about how someone should act in society: whether they should be concerned with obligations that need to be carried out or focus on achieving their own goals and grow as a person. Observing the relationship between regulatory focus and contextual framing of a task could provide information about how tasks are approached and perceived by individuals who express either one, both, or neither of the regulatory foci.

### ***Context Framing and Regulatory Focus***

Another area of research worth exploring in the future is regarding context framing. Although a person may be predisposed to have a regulatory focus, it can be influenced by context. That is, though a person may be more likely to express a certain type of regulatory focus, it can also change depending on the situation one is in. For example, Roney, Higgins, and Shah (1995) tested the effect of framing, or the manipulation of regulatory focus, on a participant's persistence at an anagram puzzle solving task and found that participants with an induced prevention focus persisted less than participants with an induced promotion focus (Roney et al., 1995)<sup>1</sup>.

The experimental manipulation used in this study framed the task positively for one experimental condition and negatively for the other. The positive framing induced a temporary promotion focus state; the negative framing induced a temporary prevention focus state. The positive framing consisted of telling the participant that their second task

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<sup>1</sup> Anagrams are word puzzles that can range in difficulty, each made up of a mixture of letters that are used to spell new words. In both studies participants worked on solvable and unsolvable anagrams (Roney et al., 1995). A solvable anagram uses all of the letters given to make a new word. An unsolvable anagram would not use all of the letters given to make words. In both studies, the participants asked to solve anagrams were given 45 seconds to solve each one, though they could choose to move onto the next puzzle (group of letters) at any time (Roney et al., 1995).



would be “Wheel of Fortune” if they were able to solve 22 of the 25 anagrams (Roney et al., 1995). The negative framing involved informing participants that their task for the second trial would be “unvaried repetition” if they missed more than three anagrams (Roney et al., 1995). Though the names and “scores” for the second trial tasks had different names, they were identical in both conditions. The results of this study showed that participants with an induced prevention focus persisted less than participants with an induced promotion focus (Roney et al., 1995). Those in the prevention induced focus may have persisted less because they didn’t want to increase the chance of getting an incorrect answer, as opposed to participants with an induced promotion focus who may have taken more risks to get the correct answer.

In a second study (Roney et al., 1995), after their first trial of anagrams, participants were either given positive feedback (“You got it, good job!”) intended to induce a temporary promotion focus state in participants or negative feedback (“You didn’t get it.”) intended to induce a temporary prevention focus state in participants. The participants’ persistence at the anagrams task in the second trial was then measured to determine if it was affected by the manipulation of the regulatory focus of the participants. Those students with a temporary prevention focus quit before their 45 seconds was up on 19% of the anagrams. Those participants with an induced promotion focus gave up only on 4% of the anagrams (Roney et al., 1995). Thus, participants with a temporary prevention focus were much less persistent at the anagrams task than participants with a temporary promotion focus. Again, this is possibly because participants with a prevention focus kept the number of mistakes to a minimum, so they’d rather not solve the anagram at all instead of taking a risk and getting the wrong answer.

Although this is a single study, the results show that inducing a promotion focus is positively correlated with persistence at a task. If replicated, the results could possibly be beneficial in the context of classrooms to help motivate students to persist on their assignments.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study do support previous studies that regulatory foci are related to hassle assessment and perceived stress, and that there are individuals who expressed both or regulatory foci. There were also individuals who expressed low scores for both regulatory foci. It was found that individuals who had higher Prevention Focus scores, regardless of Promotion scores, reported experiencing more hassles at higher Severity and more Perceived Stress. Individuals with Low Prevention Low Promotion scores reported experiencing the least number of hassles at low to no Severity and the least amount of Perceived Stress. Two directions were suggested for future research on the topic of regulatory focus that may shed more light on understanding how an individual's regulatory focus or foci relationship with the nature of the stress experience.

## APPENDIX SECTION

### Regulatory Focus Questionnaire

#### Items

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Using the scale below, please write the appropriate number in the blank beside each item.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all true of me								Very true of me

1. In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life.
2. I am anxious that I will fall short of my responsibilities and obligations.
3. I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations.
4. I often think about the person I am afraid I might become in the future.
5. I often think about the person I would ideally like to be in the future.
6. I typically focus on the success I hope to achieve in the future.
7. I often worry that I will fail to accomplish my academic goals.
8. I often think about how I will achieve academic success.
9. I often imagine myself experiencing bad things that I fear might happen to me.
10. I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life.
11. I am more oriented toward preventing losses than I am toward achieving gains.
12. My major goal in school right now is to achieve my academic ambitions.
13. My major goal in school right now is to avoid becoming an academic failure.
14. I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to reach my “ideal self”—to fulfill my hopes, wishes, and aspirations.
15. I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I “ought” to be—to fulfill my duties, responsibilities, and obligations.
16. In general, I am focused on achieving positive outcomes in my life.
17. I often imagine myself experiencing good things that I hope will happen to me.
18. Overall, I am more oriented toward achieving success than preventing failure.

## **Revised University Student Hassles Scale RUSH-S**

Indicate how often a particular hassle had occurred during the last month using a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 0 = "did not occur" to 4 = "always occurred"). If the hassle did occur, the respondents indicate, on a 5-point scale, the severity of the given hassle (ranging from 1 = "not at all severe" to 5 = "extremely severe").

### **Time Pressures**

- Too many things to do
- Too many responsibilities
- Class assignment deadlines
- Organizing time
- Balancing school/social relationships
- Pressure to get good grades
- Studying for class
- Concentrating on school work
- Not enough time for family
- Concerns regarding meeting high standards
- Trouble relaxing
- Learning material is difficult
- Not enough personal energy

### **Financial constraints**

- Financial security
- Money for emergencies
- Owing money
- Not enough money for housing
- College expenses
- Not enough money for entertainment
- Not enough money for clothing

### **Race/Ethnicity**

- Being treated differently because of race, ethnicity
- Feeling neglected by my own race, ethnic group
- Perceptions others have based on cultural stereotypes
- People unable to relate to people of color
- Feeling discriminated against
- People assuming I am rich/poor because of my race/ethnicity

### **Gender**

- Not taken seriously because of gender
- Being treated differently due to gender
- Denied opportunities because of gender
- Someone saying, "Here, let me do that," thinking I can't because of my gender
- People making gender jokes

### **Friendships**

- Being lonely
- Not having close friends

Making friends  
Communication problems with friends  
Introducing myself at school  
Going out with friends

**Traffic**

Driving to school  
Traffic  
Parking  
Driving around town

**Religion**

Close-mindedness toward my religious beliefs  
People making fun of my religion  
Feeling unaccepted because of religion

**Safety**

Safety of personal belongings  
Fear of losing valuables  
Locking up personal belongings  
Personal safety

**Employment**

Problems on the job  
Job satisfaction  
Work schedule

**Physical appearance**

Weight concerns  
Physical appearance  
Getting into shape

**Parental expectations**

Parents' expectations  
Demanding parents  
Dependence on parents

## Perceived Stress Scale

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during THE LAST MONTH. In each case, you will be asked to indicate your response by placing an “X” over the circle representing HOW OFTEN you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don’t try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

0	1	2	3	4
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?
4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with day-to-day problems and annoyances?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?
6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?
12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?
13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?
14. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

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