

**SELF-CONCEPT AND RESILIENCE TO STRESS
IN A COLLEGE SAMPLE**

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SELF-CONCEPT AND RESILIENCE TO STRESS

IN A COLLEGE SAMPLE

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In Partial Fulfilment

of the requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

by


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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated gratefully to
Adebola, Olaniran, and Opeyemi
for their love and support.

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ABSTRACT

There has been a continuous increase in the number of studies conducted on the external variables that mitigate against stress. This study examined the relationship between self-concept, an internal variable, and perception of stress among the undergraduate population. The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (SPPC) and the Inventory of College Students' Recent Life Experiences (ICSRLE) instruments were completed by 125 undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 25. Both instruments assessed subjects' levels of self-concept and stress. The hypotheses were that students with a high self-concept as measured by the SPPC would report a low level of stress as measured by ICSRLE, and students with a high global self-worth would report a low level of stress. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyze the data. Results indicated a negative correlation between self-concept and stress scores. A similar relationship was also obtained between global self-worth and stress. The findings support both hypotheses. The implications of these findings are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The fast pace of modern life increases stressful events in peoples' lives. Yet, in adverse situations, some people display a high degree of resilience. What makes some individuals in stressful situations more resilient than others who are in similar situations? Certainly, there are many variables within the environment that account for individual differences in resilience to stress. Similarly, it is assumed that there are variables within the individual that make for these differences. This study is an attempt to gain more understanding of the role of self-concept, a variable within the individual, as it relates to resilience to stress. According to Zuckerman (1989), there is a strong indication that self-concept is associated with level of stress. This implies that individuals' vulnerability to stress may be due, in part to differences in the way they perceive themselves.

A study that investigates how self-concept affects stress among the undergraduate population is worthwhile. Gaining an understanding of how self-concept relates to stress can be valuable information that college administrators can use to educate their students. This can increase students' awareness of some of the forces within them that affect their levels of stress, as well as their

reactions to stress. This has the potential for promoting better psychological health among college students which in turn may aid academic excellence.

Stress

The concept of stress is subjective. It depends on how an individual cognitively views, interprets, and reacts to certain situations. In spite of the subjective nature of stress, researchers have developed some instruments that objectively assess level of stress. Sources of stress are numerous and varied, and they are a part of life that we cannot escape (Corey & Corey, 1989). Numerous studies indicate that stress negatively influences physical and psychological health (Nakano, 1991; Dunkel-Schetter & Lobel, 1990; Corey & Corey, 1989; Kessler, Price, & Worthman, 1985; DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman & Lazarus, 1982; Comstock & Slome, 1973). There is also evidence that self-concept is one of the major variables that affect how people respond to stressful situations (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Stress and College Students

According to the literature, stress in college students has increased in the 1980s. (Dunkel-Schetter & Lobel, 1990; Astin, Green, Korn, Schalit & Berz, 1988; Koplik & Devito, 1986). When compared to 20 years ago, students are said to be experiencing more stress. They are also said to be

experiencing different kinds of stress. While college students are not immune to life events that cause stress, this population has unique school-related experiences, like academics, time management, relationships with roommates, and peer acceptance (Dunkel-Schetter & Lobel, 1990; Hamilton & Fagot, 1988).

Stress among college students has been extensively studied. Studies have focused on stressors that relate to adjustment to college (Compas, Wagner, Slavin, & Vannatta, 1986), how students cope with stress (D'Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991; Nakano, 1991; Weintraub, Carver, & Scheier, 1989; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985), the role of gender in stress and coping (Zuckerman, 1989; Hamilton & Fagot, 1988), and academic stress (Kohn & Frazer, 1986).

Numerous studies and surveys have also been conducted on stress and psychological symptoms among college students. Comstock and Slome (1973) investigated the widespread nature of emotional distress among college students. They found that 30 percent had moderate to severe emotional problems. In the 1980s, Kessler, Price and Worthman (1985) found that there was a link between stressful events and poor mental and physical health. In the 1990s, Nakano (1991) investigated coping strategies and psychological symptoms among college students. Using a Japanese sample, Nakano reported that there was a positive correlation between

scores on the Hassle Scale (Japanese version) and psychological symptoms. The higher scores on the Hassle Scale predicted psychological symptoms such as depression.

In a 1987 study Linville investigated the role of self-complexity in stress-related illnesses. Linville described self-complexity as having different attributes or traits in different situations. For example, an individual may play the role of a student, a daughter, a friend, and a confidant across situations. This individual has self-complexity because she thinks about herself in a variety of ways. The basic contention of the study was that high self-complexity appears to make an individual less susceptible to stress-related illness and depression.

The study which was carried out in two phases used 106 undergraduate subjects (43 male and 68 female). The age range was not reported. Subjects were tested in small groups of one to five. During the second phase, subjects completed a self-complexity task and measures of stressful events, depression, and illness. Linville used a card-sorting technique in which subjects sorted 33 adjective cards into categories of traits that described them. Subjects also completed the following instruments: The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977), The Cohen-Hoberman Inventory of Physical Symptoms (CHIPS; Cohen & Hoberman, 1983), College Students

Life Events Scale (CSLES; Levine & Perkins, 1980), and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). In addition, subjects listed all illnesses that had occurred within the previous two weeks. There was a two week interval between the two sessions.

According to Linville, the results of the study indicated that low self-complexity was associated with more extreme reactions to stressful situations. Linville concluded that since self-complexity interacts with level of stress, individuals with higher self-complexity will not be as adversely affected by negative events as individuals with lower self-complexity.

Hassle-based Stress

Hassle-based stress can be defined as a number of minor, unpleasant occurrences (time pressure, social treatment, friendship problems) that happen on a daily basis. Many studies have reported that these occurrences have a more negative impact on physical and mental health, than major life events (Kohn, Lafreniere, Pickering, & Macdonald, 1994; Ivancevich, 1986; DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman & Lazarus, 1982; Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981). Kohn, Lafreniere, and Gurevich (1990), developed an instrument, the Inventory of College Students' Life Experiences (ICSRLE), for the appraisal of hassle-based stress in college students. Kohn et al. claimed that the new

instrument was an improvement over Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus' (1981) Hassle Scale because it removed certain variables like poor mental health, or distress that can unintentionally interact with a hassle measure.

In 1991, Kohn, Lafreniere, & Gurevich used the instrument (ICSRLE) to investigate the effect of anxiety and reactivity on the outcome of hassle-based stress. Using 211 undergraduates as subjects, Kohn et al. reported that there was a significant correlation between reported daily hassles, physical well-being, and psychiatric symptoms. Specifically, scores on hassle and trait anxiety had a positive correlation with scores on perceived stress.

Self-concept

In a broad sense, self-concept refers to the picture we have of ourselves. It deals with how we see ourselves, the beliefs we have about ourselves, the qualities we have, and the unique ways that we behave. Harter (1989) defined domain as a specific area of competence such as creative, athletic, or intellectual, that an individual possesses. Self-concept can be summed up as the combination of peoples' cognitive views about themselves, and the way they evaluate their competencies when functioning in specific domains (Harter, 1989). The overall evaluation of our worth is generally referred to as self-esteem. In most of the literature, self-concept is synonymous with self-perception.

For this study, the term self-concept will be used.

Two early theorists on self-concept, James (1884 [1892]) and Cooley (1922) acknowledged that individuals have a global concept of themselves more than they have a specific domain concept. While James claimed that one's overall sense of worth is determined by the individual's own evaluation of competence, Cooley put more emphasis on the social nature. According to Cooley, self-concept is greatly influenced by the attitudes of significant others. Some of the earlier theorists on self-concept proposed a one-dimensional view (Coopersmith, 1967). In more recent times, some theorists have proposed a multidimensional approach to assess self-concept (Harter, 1985). They argued that self-concept can best be assessed by making a distinction between how individuals evaluate their competencies in different domains and the general picture they hold of themselves. Harter (1985) developed instruments that combine self-evaluation in various domains with global self-worth to provide a profile of the self. These instruments are based on developmental stages of life and have been developed for young children, adolescents, college students, and adults.

Rosenberg (1979) made a gestalt-like postulation that an individual's sense of worth is more than the sum of his/her specific attributes across different domains. This implies that self-worth embraces the entire self and this

makes it greater than the sum of all the domains. If this claim is accurate, it is assumed that scores on a global self-worth measure may provide better information about the individual's self-concept than would the total scores from the domains that produce the self-perception profile. Therefore, scores on global self-worth may give more accurate information of the relationship that exists between self-concept and resilience to stress.

Some research indicates that people who do not have a favorable self-concept tend to have more emotion-related problems than people with a favorable self-concept (Wylie, 1979). This implies that when individuals have positive views of themselves, they are not likely to be overwhelmed when they are under stressful situations. It can therefore be assumed that self-concept acts as a confidence booster because it enables the individual to view himself/herself as having what it takes to cope. According to Linville (1987) self-concept is one of the moderators that serve as a "buffer" against stress. Having a good self-concept may reduce stress because it increases the interpersonal skills of the individual and taps resources that can lead to effective coping (Billing & Moos, 1982).

In a 1989 study, Zuckerman investigated the extent to which self-esteem, interpersonal self-confidence, and self-concepts are associated with stress. The study also

explored the role of gender. The subjects were 804 females and 127 males from seven liberal arts colleges (5 female, 2 coeducational) in the Northeast. Subjects completed the Rosenberg Scale (1965), On the Whole I am Satisfied with Myself (Silber & Tippet, 1965), the Texas Social Behavior Inventory Form A (TSBI; Helmreich & Stapp, 1974), The Areas of Stress Scale, a modified version of the Life Conditions Measure (Makosky, 1982), and the Habit of Nervous Tension Scale (Thomas, 1971, 1976). These instruments were used to assess self-esteem, self-concept, areas of stress, and reaction to stress.

Zuckerman found that there was a strong correlation between self-esteem, self-concept, and level of stress. Specifically, subjects who scored high on the self-concept scale reported less stress. Also, for both men and women, the study found that the strongest correlate of stress was global self-esteem. Although, one of the primary purposes of the study was to investigate gender differences, Zuckerman reported that for both males and females, high scores on self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept scales were associated with lower levels of stress and reaction to stress.

In 1992, Aspinwall and Taylor conducted a longitudinal investigation on the effect of personality variables such as self-esteem, optimism, and a sense of control on the

psychological well-being and adjustment of students to college. The subjects consisted of 672 freshmen who completed measures of personality, social support, and positive and negative affect during the first few days of entering college. Three months later follow-up measures were administered and two years later academic performance was assessed. The results indicated that high scores on self-esteem, optimism, and internal locus of control predicted greater use of active coping. Active coping predicted better adjustment to college and fewer health symptoms. It also indicated that high self-esteem increased the motivation to succeed in college.

Resilience

In the face of adversity some people display a high degree of resilience. Resilience can be defined as resistance to stress. According to Luthar & Zigler (1991), resilience is determined by the behavioral competence displayed by the person under stress. This implies that people who are resilient to stress are able to react well to stressful situations that weigh others down. Rutter (1985) claimed that individuals who are resilient possess certain qualities which include self-confidence, ability to adapt to changes, belief in self, and social problem-solving skills. These are considered protective factors that improve resilience to stress. In their review of the literature on

resilience among children, Luthar & Zigler (1991) noted that children who showed certain characteristics were more resilient to stress. These included high intellectual ability, humor, internal locus of control, and a supportive family.

In a 1989 report of a longitudinal study that covered three decades, Werner reported that subjects who had faith that they could control their environment showed more resilience to stress. The subjects for the study consisted of 698 babies born in 1955 on the Island of Kauai, Hawaii. This was a multidisciplinary study that involved nurses, pediatricians, physicians, and social workers. Later, psychologists examined the children at ages two and ten. About one-third of the children were considered "at-risk" because their parents were poor, their mothers had little formal education, there was a lot of conflict in the family, there was divorce, alcoholism, and some degree of stress at birth. At age 18, follow-up interviews were done, teachers' reports were collected, and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) was administered. At age 32, about 80 percent of the survivors were located for a follow-up study. Rotter's Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966) and the Emotionality, Activity Level, Sociability, and Impulsivity Temperament Survey for Adults (EASIT; Buss & Plomin, 1984) were administered. Structured interviews were also

conducted. Werner concluded that there were three protective factors in resilient children. These children were of at least average intelligence, had adequate communication skills, and had good family relationships.

Purpose of Study

The literature suggested that there is little understanding of the protective factors that make some people more resilient than others in stressful situations. While many studies have been done on factors that promote and minimize stress, not much has been done to investigate the protective factors (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). Such a study is particularly needed on college students since they are said to be experiencing more stress now than ever before. This study investigated the relationship between subjects' overall self-concept and the appraised level of hassle-based stress. It also examined the relationship between global self-worth and level of stress. The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (SPPC; Neemann & Harter, 1986), and the Inventory of College Students Recent Life Experiences (ICSRLE; Kohn, Lafreniere & Gurevich, 1990) was used for the study. The literature justified asking how the different subscales relate to stress. The SPPC and the ICSRLE have been specifically developed to be used with college students.

The SPPC is a 54-item instrument that assesses how students perceive themselves. The manual reports that the coefficient alpha, an index of internal consistency, of the 12 subscales ranges from .76 to .92. It also reports a criterion validity coefficient of .63 and a construct validity coefficient of .61.

The ICSRLE is a 49-item self-report instrument that appraises the impact of hassle-based experiences rather than major life events. Kohn, Lafreniere, & Gurevich (1990) reported that the ICSRLE has an alpha reliability coefficient of .89. These psychometric figures are considered acceptable. For validity, the ICSRLE is reported to have a modest correlation of .67 ($p < .0005$), with the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The PSS is another measure of stress that is considered reliable and widely used.

The hypotheses for the study were:

a) that students with a high self-concept as measured by the SPPC would report a low level of stress as measured by the ICSRLE, and b) that students who had high global self-worth as measured by the Global Self-Worth subscale of the SPPC would perceive less stress (low score on the ICSRLE).

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects consisted of 125 undergraduates (89 female and 36 male, mean age = 20.6) from General Psychology and Psychology of Adjustment classes at Austin Peay State University. The instrument was administered to those who volunteered, but only the data from traditional students (18-25 years) was analyzed.

Materials

The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (SPPC; Neemann & Harter, 1986), was used to assess subjects' self-concept. Subjects rated all the items on a scale of 1 to 4 in order to describe "What I am like" for 12 domains and a global self-worth scale. The domains are: Creativity, Intellectual Ability, Scholastic Competence, Job Competence, Athletic Competence, Appearance, Romantic Relationships, Social Acceptance, Close Friendships, Parent Relationships, Finding Humor in One's Life, and Morality. These domains are further grouped into two categories. The first five assesses the competence category while the last seven assesses the social relationship category.

The manual contains information about administration and scoring. Subjects were instructed to check one box per item. First, they decided which of the two opposite persons

presented they were most like. Then they rated the degree to which they were like that person as either "sort of true" or "really true." Scores ranged from 1 to 216. Higher scores indicated a more positive self-concept.

The answer sheet appeared to be confusing because of the potential for subjects to check two boxes. For this reason, the instructions and test were given to ten students prior to administering the instrument to determine if there were features that should be altered. The findings indicated that the instructions needed to be retyped. Key words were made bolder and underlined.

The Inventory of College Students Recent Life Experiences (ICSRLE; Kohn, Lafreniere, & Gurevich, 1990), was used to appraise the impact of hassle-based experiences. The instrument has been factor-analyzed into the following seven subscales: Developmental Challenge, Time Pressure, Academic Alienation, Romantic Problems, Assorted Annoyances, General Social Mistreatment, and Friendship Problems. Subjects evaluated the impact of events that occurred during the previous month. Subjects then rated the impact of each item as it applied to them. The rating is from 1 = "not at all part of my life;" 2 = "only slightly part of my life;" 3 = "distinctly part of my life;" and 4 = "very much part of my life." Scores ranged from 1 to 196. Kohn et al. emphasized that the ICSRLE is not a rating of occurrence of

stressors but an appraisal of the stressors. The ICSRLE is a relatively new instrument that has not yet been published, but it has been used in some studies. Written permission to use the instrument was granted by the author, Dr. P. J. Kohn. (Appendix B). See Appendix D for a sample of the ICSRLE.

Procedure

The researcher sought permission from professors who taught General Psychology and Psychology of Adjustment to recruit their students for the study. Data was collected from seven classes. The instruments were administered in a group session that took about 20 minutes. The researcher distributed a packet that contained: 1) the Informed Consent Form, 2) the SPPC, and 3) the ICSRLE. Subjects were asked to read, sign, and hand in the informed concept form prior to taking the SPPC and ICSRLE. The researcher read the instructions on the instrument and encouraged subjects to follow along. This was done to ensure standardization. Biographical information required was gender and age. Subjects were debriefed after the exercise was completed. A pair of number-symbols (e.g. 1a, 1b) was put on each student's set of answer sheets. The SPPC was scored before the ICSRLE. Any instrument with missing data resulted in elimination of that subject's scores from analyses.

Design

This was a correlational study. The independent variable was self-concept while the dependent variable was the level of hassle-based stress. Analyses focused on the total score on the SPPC and the ICSRLE. High scores on the self-concept scale indicated a positive self-concept. Self-concept scale scores were compared with stress scale scores to assess the relationship between the two variables. Analysis also focused on the SPPC's global self-worth subscale and the overall stress scores. The SYSTAT statistics package was utilized in the analysis (Systat Inc., 1990). The level of significance for testing both hypotheses was set at $\alpha = .05$.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This study had two hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that students with high scores on the SPPC scale would report low levels of stress on the ICSRLE scale. The data was computed between relevant variables using the Pearson Correlation statistic. The analysis revealed a negative correlation between overall scores on the SPPC and the ICSRLE, such that, as self-concept increased, stress level decreased, $r = - 0.476$, $p < .001$. The second hypothesis was that students with high scores on the global self-worth subscale would perceive less stress (low scores on ICSRLE). Analysis of data revealed a negative correlation between global self-worth and level of stress, $r = - 0.547$, $p < .001$. These results supported both hypotheses.

Although not specifically hypothesized, the results also indicated strong relationships between overall stress scores (ICSRLE) and self-concept (SPPC) subtests. For example, scholastic competence, social acceptance, appearance, parent relationship, close friendship, intellectual ability, morality, (use of) humor, and global self-worth were significantly and negatively correlated with stress. However, athletic competence and romantic relationship were not significantly correlated with stress. Table 1 summarizes these findings. Similarly, all the

stress subtests except romantic problems showed a strong relationship with the overall SPPC score. See Table 2.

Table I

Overall ICSRLE Score and SPPC Subtests.

<u>Self-concept Variables</u>	<u>r</u>
Job Competence	- .218 **
Scholastic Competence	- .409 ***
Social Acceptance	- .270 ***
Appearance	- .382 ***
Parent Relationship	- .255 ***
Close Friendship	- .303 ***
Intellectual Ability	- .355 ***
Morality	- .296 ***
Romantic Relationship	- .103 (NS)
Humor	- .236 ***
Creativity	- .216 **
Athletic Competence	- .049 (NS)
Global Self-Worth	- .547 ***

Table II

Overall SPPC Score and ICSRLE Subtests.

<u>Stress Subtests</u>		<u>r</u>
Developmental Challenges		- .406 ***
Time Pressure		- .204 **
Academic Alienation		- .444 ***
Romantic Problems		- .168 (NS)
Assorted Annoyances		- .298 ***
General Social Mistreatment		- .481 ***
Friendship Problems		- .199 **
NS	Not Significant	
*	.05	
**	.01	
***	.001	

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicated an inverse relationship between self-concept and level of stress. When a subject's self-concept was elevated, the level of stress tended to be low and vice versa. High scores on the SPSC scale indicate a positive self-concept. The results correspond to many literature findings. For example, Rosenberg (1985) and Zuckerman (1989) found that a low self-concept was associated with less favorable feelings of psychological well-being. This is also in line with the assumption that low anxiety accompanies a positive self-concept. It also agrees with Rogers (1951) claim that positive and accepting self-concepts are associated with a healthy psychological adjustment and good mental health.

There are several explanations for this finding. One explanation is that students who have high opinions of themselves have the belief that even though they may not be able to always control their situations, they can influence what happens to them. Such students may be motivated to persevere more in stressful situations.

Another possible explanation is that students who have a positive self-concept may be more self-assured. Such students are less likely to have self-defeating attitudes, which can in turn, influence how they feel and react in

stressful situations. They may be less anxious because they are less sensitive to criticism. And since persons with a positive self-concept tend to be self-reliant, they may perceive less stress.

Another possibility is that students who have a positive self-concept may be more satisfied with themselves. This may result from a sense that they have some influence over themselves and their immediate environment. When a person is dissatisfied with him/herself, this can have a damaging effect on the person's general feeling of well-being. This is in line with Beck's (1967) finding that the majority of severely depressed people had negative attitudes toward themselves and they also showed low self-evaluation.

One of the hypotheses was that students who had high global self-worth would perceive less stress. The findings revealed that as predicted, students with high global self-worth reported less stress. This may be because such students are more accepting of their strengths and weaknesses, and as a result, may be better able to tolerate distress.

Although not specifically hypothesized, the data presented in Chapter 3 indicated a strong relationship between certain variables. For example, global self-worth had a strong negative correlation with all the stress variables; with the strongest correlates occurring with

general social mistreatment, academic alienation, and developmental challenges. A plausible interpretation of this is that students who have a high overall self-evaluation may have good social skills that will encourage other people to like and treat them well. They may be more accepting of other people and may be more popular in social relationships. They may also have good developmental and academic skills that help them perceive less challenges in these areas. The relationship between global self-worth and time pressure, although significant, was not as strong as with the other stress variables. This suggests that having a high overall self-evaluation may not necessarily help the individual in dealing with time-pressured activities.

The strongest correlates of low stress were global self-worth, scholastic competence, intellectual ability, and parental relationship. This suggests that students who are attractive, who are scholarly, those who have high intellectual abilities, and those who have good relationships with their parents may perceive less stress in their daily activities.

The correlation between athletic competence and perception of stress was insignificant. A plausible explanation for this could be that intercollegiate athletics are very competitive and therefore more stressful. According to Blackston (1990), sources of stress for

athletes include long hours of practice, pressures from coaches and team mates, and anxiety about performance. All of these tend to produce added stresses that self-concept (even when it is positive) may not be able to influence significantly.

The subscale, romantic relationship also had a weak correlation with perceived stress. A plausible explanation for this is that romantic relationships involve considerable emotional expenditure from this population, and this sometimes creates stress for students. A positive self-concept may have little influence on students in this area.

The results also indicated that social relationship skills were stronger correlates of low stress than the competence skills. For example, global self-worth, appearance, social acceptance, close friendship, and parental relationship fall under the social relationship category. A possible explanation for this is that good social skills indicate good interpersonal relationships. Such skills can greatly help the individual to deal with people better, and that may in turn translate into how other people deal with them. This rationale may help explain why students who perceive themselves as having high attributes in this category also reported less problems with social mistreatment. This finding does not support Harter's (1985) view that individuals with high competence attributes would

report less stress than those with high social relationship attributes.

This data describes the relationship between self-concept and stress level. It does not imply a causal relationship. That students who had a positive self-concept reported a low level of stress does not mean that the degree of self-concept was responsible for less stress. It is possible that the low level of stress influenced the way they felt about themselves and could be responsible for their positive self-concept.

There are important implications for higher education from this study. College administrators can use the information to educate students about the association between self-concept and psychological health. Specifically, that a positive self-concept may have positive effect on psychological well-being, while a negative self-concept may have the opposite effect. University counseling and testing centers might consider conducting psychological wellness seminars for the students. The SPSC which takes about 15 minutes to complete could be administered to incoming students to determine their self-concept level. Students identified as having a low self-concept could be encouraged to participate in appropriate workshops. This would be a preventive program that could be beneficial to the individual students. Such preventive programs might be

more cost-effective for university administrators than providing remedial services when students become stressed out. Also, since the data suggested that a positive self-concept had a bearing on level of stress, university counselors who seek to help students with stress-related problems might be advised to attempt to enhance the individual student's self-concept.

There are limitations to this study. There are many variables that were not controlled for which could have affected the level of stress. One such variable is the individual student's coping mechanisms. A combination of other factors may also have been responsible for this relationship. There is also the potential problem of the reliability of data generated through self-report. Subjects could falsify or distort their responses in order to present themselves in certain ways. However, it was assumed that asking subjects to remain anonymous might make their responses more accurate and therefore, more reliable. In addition, it may not be valid to generalize the results to the entire college population because the sample was restricted to traditional students. The researcher suggests that further studies be conducted, with an extended sample, that would investigate the relationship between self-concept and level of stress when coping mechanisms are controlled for. Results from such a study would provide more precise

information as to the relationship between self-concept and level of stress among a larger college population.

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APPENDIXES

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to investigate college students recent experiences and their reaction to these experiences. Your responses are confidential. At no time will you be identified nor will anyone other than the investigators have access to your responses. The investigator is not aware of any potential hazard which may occur from participation in the research. The demographic information collected will be used for the purposes of analysis. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to terminate at any time without any penalty.

The scope of the project will be explained fully upon completion.

Thank you for your cooperation.

I agree to participate in the present study being conducted under the supervision of a faculty member of the Department of Psychology at Austin Peay State University. I have been informed, either orally or in writing or both, about the procedures to be followed and about any discomforts or risks which may be involved. The investigator has offered to answer any further inquiries as I may have regarding the procedures. I understand that I am free to terminate my participation at any time without penalty or prejudice and to have all data obtained from me withdrawn from the study and destroyed. I have also been told of any benefits that may result from my participation.

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

SIGNATURE

DATE

Appendix B

September 27, 1994

Mrs. Comfort B. Asanbe
305 Justice Drive
Clarksville, TN 37043
U.S.A.

Dear Mrs. Asanbe,

Thank you for your letter of September 19 (received September 26).

You are welcome to use the ICSRLE if you wish. I enclose several reprints, preprints, and questionnaire forms pertaining to it and its two sibling measures (one for adults and one for high-school students). Also enclosed is an additional preprint, not of mine, but of Dr. Augustine Oskamp's which bears on the reliability and validity of the ICSRLE. (I haven't checked to see whether Dr. Oskamp's article has been printed yet or remains in press.)

I hope the above and enclosed are responsive to your needs, and would appreciate receiving your offered feedback on your study and its findings. (This would help in dealing with future inquiries like your own.)

Yours sincerely,



Paul M. Kohn, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology

PMK/sl
Enclosures

P.S. Thank you for your consideration in sending a stamped self-addressed envelope, but you might note for future reference that the stamp is not usable for mailing from Canada.

The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (SPPC)

With this format, the student is first asked which kind of student he or she is most like; the student then decides whether that description is "sort of true" or "really true" for him or her. The effectiveness of this question format lies in the implication that half of the students in the world (or in one's reference group) view themselves in one way, whereas the other half view themselves in the opposite manner; either choice is legitimized. The statistical data provide additional evidence with regard to the effectiveness of this type of question.

While a detailed scoring key is provided, the general procedure is that each item is scored from 1 to 4, where a score of 1 indicates low competence, and a score of 4 reflects high competence. A complete analysis of the reasoning behind this format can be found in Harter (1982). The variability in the items and the use of the full range of responses justifies this choice of question format.

For every subscale, half of the items were worded with the negative statement first to ensure balance within the subscale. To counter balance the entire measure, the positive and negative items were evenly distributed so that approximately every other question began with the negative alternative.

Specific Scale Structure

The primary measure is The Self-Perception Profile for College Students, a questionnaire containing 13 subscales including global self-worth subscale had six items. The actual questionnaire is entitled WHAT I AM LIKE. See Appendix A for the instruments. Note that you have permission to copy these instruments for your own use.

WHAT I AM LIKE

Age _____ Male _____ Female _____

The following are statements which allow students to describe themselves. There are no right or wrong answers since students differ markedly. Please read the entire sentence across. **FIRST** decide which one of the two parts of each statement best describes you; **THEN** go to that side of the statement and check whether that is just sort of true for you or really true for you. You will just check **ONE** of the four boxes for each statement. Think about what you are like in the college environment as you read and answer each one.

	Really True For Me	Sort of True For Me				Sort of True For Me	Really True For Me
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students like the kind of person they are	BUT	Other students wish that they were different.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are not very proud of the work they do on their job	BUT	Other students are very proud of the work they do on their job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel confident that they are mastering their coursework	BUT	Other students do not feel so confident.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are not satisfied with their social skills	BUT	Other students think their social skills are just fine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are not happy with the way they look	BUT	Other students are happy with the way they look.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students like the way they act when they are around their parents	BUT	Other students wish they acted differently around their parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students get kind of lonely because they don't really have a close friend to share things with	BUT	Other students don't usually get too lonely because they do have a close friend to share things with.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel like they are just as smart or smarter than other students	BUT	Other students wonder if they are as smart.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students often question the morality of their behavior	BUT	Other students feel their behavior is usually moral.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel that people they like romantically will be attracted to them	BUT	Other students worry about whether people they like romantically will be attracted to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When some students do something sort of stupid that later appears very funny, they find it hard to	BUT	When other students do something sort of stupid that later appears very funny, they can easily laugh	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Really True For Me	Sort of True For Me			Sort of True For Me	Really True For Me	
12.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel they are just as creative or even more so than other students	BUT	Other students wonder if they are as creative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel they could do well at just about any new athletic activity they haven't tried before	BUT	Other students are afraid they might not do well at athletic activities they haven't ever tried.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are often disappointed with themselves	BUT	Other students are usually quite pleased with themselves.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel they are very good at their job	BUT	Other students worry about whether they can do their job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students do very well at their studies	BUT	Other students don't do very well at their studies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students find it hard to make new friends	BUT	Other students are able to make new friends easily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are happy with their height and weight	BUT	Other students wish their height or weight was different.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students find it hard to act naturally when they are around their parents	BUT	Other students find it easy to act naturally around their parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are able to make close friends they can really trust	BUT	Other students find it hard to make close friends they can really trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students do not feel they are very mentally able	BUT	Other students feel that they are very mentally able.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students usually do what is morally right	BUT	Other students sometimes don't do what they know is morally right.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students find it hard to establish romantic relationships	BUT	Other students don't have difficulty establishing romantic relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students don't mind being kidded by their friends	BUT	Other students are bothered when friends kid them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students worry that they are not as creative or inventive as other people	BUT	Other students feel they are very creative and inventive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students don't feel they are very athletic	BUT	Other students do feel they are athletic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Really True For Me	Sort of True For Me			Sort of True For Me	Really True For Me	
27.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students usually like themselves as a person	BUT	Other students often don't like themselves as a person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel confident about their ability to do a new job	BUT	Other students worry about whether they can do a new job they haven't tried before.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students have trouble figuring out homework assignments	BUT	Other students rarely have trouble with their homework assignments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students like the way they interact with other people	BUT	Other students wish their interactions with other people were different.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students wish their body was different	BUT	Other students like their body the way it is.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel comfortable being themselves around their parents	BUT	Other students have difficulty being themselves around their parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students don't have a close friend they can share their personal thoughts and feelings with	BUT	Other students do have a friend who is close enough for them to share thoughts that are really personal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel they are just as bright or brighter than most people	BUT	Other students wonder if they are as bright.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students would like to be a better person morally	BUT	Other students think they are quite moral.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students have the ability to develop romantic relationships	BUT	Other students do not find it easy to develop romantic relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students have a hard time laughing at the ridiculous or silly things they do	BUT	Other students find it easy to laugh at themselves.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students do not feel that they are very inventive	BUT	Other students feel that they are very inventive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel they are better than others at sports	BUT	Other students don't feel they can play as well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students really like the way they are leading their lives	BUT	Other students often don't like the way they are leading their lives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are not satisfied with the way they do their job	BUT	Other students are quite satisfied with the way they do their job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Really True For Me	Sort of True For Me				Sort of True For Me	Really True For Me
42	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students some times do not feel intellectually competent at their studies	BUT	Other students usually do feel intellec- tually competent at their studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel that they are so- cially accepted by many people	BUT	Other students wish more people accepted them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students like their physical ap- pearance the way it is	BUT	Other students do not like their physical appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students find that they are unable to get along with their parents	BUT	Other students get along with their parents quite well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are able to make really close friends	BUT	Other students find it hard to make really close friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students would really rather be different	BUT	Other students are very happy being the way they are	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students ques- tion whether they are very intelligent	BUT	Other students feel they are intelligent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students live up to their own moral standards	BUT	Other students have trouble living up to their moral standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students worry that when they like someone romantically, that person won't like like them back	BUT	Other students feel that when they are romantically interested in someone, that person will like them back	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students can really laugh at cer- tain things they do	BUT	Other students have a hard time laughing at themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students feel they have a lot of original ideas	BUT	Other students ques- tion whether their ideas are very original	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students don't do well at activities requiring physical skill	BUT	Other students are good at activities requiring physical skill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
54	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some students are often dissatisfied with themselves	BUT	Other students are usually satisfied with themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX D

Inventory of College Students' Recent Life Experiences (ICSRLE)

Following is a list of experiences which many students have some time or other. Please Indicate for each experience how much it has been a part of your life over the past month. Put a "1" in the space provided next to an experience if it was not at all part of your life over the past month (e.g., "trouble with mother in law - 1"); "2" for an experience which was only slightly part of your life over that time; "3" for an experience which was distinctly part of your life; and "4" for an experience which was very much a part of your life over the past month.

Intensity of Experience Over Past Month

- 1 = not at all part of my life
 2 = only slightly part of my life
 3 = distinctly part of my life
 4 = very much part of my life

1. Conflicts with boyfriend's/girlfriend's/spouse's family _____
2. Being let down or disappointed by friends _____
3. Conflict with professor(s) _____
4. Social rejection _____
5. Too many things to do at once _____
6. Being taken for granted _____
7. Financial conflicts with family members _____
8. Having your trust betrayed by a friend _____
9. Separation from people you care about _____
10. Having your contributions overlooked _____
11. Struggling to meet your academic standards _____
12. Being taken advantage of _____
13. Not enough leisure time _____
14. Struggling to meet the academic standards of others _____

Intensity of Experience over Past Month

45

- 1 = not at all part of my life
2 = only slightly part of my life
3 = distinctly part of my life
4 = very much part of my life

15. A lot of responsibilities _____
16. Dissatisfaction with school _____
17. Decisions about intimate relationship(s) _____
18. Not enough time to meet your obligations _____
19. Dissatisfaction with your mathematical ability _____
20. Important decisions about your future career _____
21. Financial burdens _____
22. Dissatisfaction with your reading ability _____
23. Important decisions about your education _____
24. Loneliness _____
25. Lower grades than you hoped for _____
26. Conflict with teaching assistant(s) _____
27. Not enough time for sleep _____
28. Conflicts with your family _____
29. Heavy demands from your extra-curricular activities _____
30. Finding courses too demanding _____
31. Conflicts with friends _____
32. Hard effort to get ahead _____
33. Poor health of a friend _____
34. Disliking your studies _____
35. Getting "ripped off" or cheated in the purchase
of services _____

Intensity of Experience over Past Month

46

- 1 = not at all part of my life
2 = only slightly part of my life
3 = distinctly part of my life
4 = very much part of my life

36. Social conflicts over smoking _____
37. Difficulties with transportation _____
38. Disliking fellow student(s) _____
39. Conflicts with boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse _____
40. Dissatisfaction with your ability at written expression _____
41. Interruptions of your school work _____
42. Social isolation _____
43. Long waits to get service (e.g. at banks, stores, etc.) _____
44. Being ignored _____
45. Dissatisfaction with your physical appearance _____
46. Finding course(s) uninteresting _____
47. Gossip concerning someone you care about _____
48. Failing to get expected job _____
49. Dissatisfaction with your athletic skills _____