What Motivates our Contingencies of Self-Worth

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Contingencies of Self-Worth

- Domains that self-esteem are based on

- Examples:
  - Power over others, god’s love, approval from others, morality, academic success, etc.
Academic Contingency

- Doing well in school gives me a sense of self-respect
- I feel better about myself when I know I’m doing well academically
Academic Contingency Contd...

Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn & Chase, JPSP 2003

- Test grade
  - Good score
    - SE and identification ↑
  - Bad score
    - SE and identification ↓

- Greater for Academically Contingent
Applying to grad school

- Acceptance days
  - SE ↑
- Rejection Days
  - SE ↓

Results moderated by academic contingency
Performance goals

- My goal in classes is to get a better grade than most of the students

Motivation to work for grades
Intellectual Contingency

**Approach - take advantage of chances to get smarter**
- Proficiency in a particular subject or field gives my self-esteem a boost
- Having knowledge I can teach gives my sense of self-esteem a boost

**Avoidance - avoid looking unintelligent**
- My self-respect goes down when I can’t comprehend something important
- It bothers me if I cannot intellectually argue a point
Intellectual Contingency and School Goals  Buck & Wolfe, 2004

- Intel-approach with Mastery Goals
  - I hope to have gained a broader and deeper knowledge of the material when I am done with a class

- Intel-avoid with Work Avoidance Goals
  - I just want to avoid doing poorly in a class
Self-Determination Theory

- Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic
- Self-determined is psychologically healthy
  - Autonomy
  - Choice

- Elliot & McGregor JPSP 2001
  - Positive predictor
    - Approach goals, deep processing
  - Negative predictor
    - Avoidance goals
Our Hypothesis

- Self-Determination
  - + with intel-approach
  - - with intel-avoid
  - - with academic
Web Survey

Who...

- N = 235; Mostly White, North American college students
- 145 women, 61 men [29 missing]
  - Age M = 24; Mode = 18
  - USA = 73%; Canada = 14%
  - Currently enrolled in college = 80%
  - White = 87%; Black/African-American= 4.3%; Asian = 3%
Scales

- **Intel-Approach (alpha = .80)**
  - When I completely understand something I feel good about myself

- **Intel-Avoid (alpha = .74)**
  - My self-respect goes down when I can’t comprehend something important

- **Academic (alpha = .89)**
  - Doing well in school gives me a sense of self-respect

- Contingency scales 1-7 likert, ↑ numbers indicating ↑ endorsement

- **Self-Determination (alpha = .71)**
  - A. I do what I do because it interests me
  - B. I do what I do because I have to
  - 1-5 Likert, 1 = only A feels true, 5 = only B feels true
# Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IC App</th>
<th>IC-Avoid</th>
<th>Acad</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Intel-approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Intel-avoid</td>
<td></td>
<td>.32**</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Academic</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-Determ</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
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- * p < .05
- ** p < .001

- Intel-approach alpha = .80
- Intel-avoid alpha = .74
- Acad alpha = .89
- Self-Determ alpha = .71
### Partial Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-Determination</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intel-Approach</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel-Avoid</td>
<td>-0.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
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</tbody>
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- * Controlling for IAvoid & Acad; $p < 0.001$
- ** Controlling for IApproach & Acad; $p = 0.003$
Discussion

- Some contingencies bad
- Self-Esteem
  - Intel-approach +
  - Intel-avoid -
- Approach vs. avoidance