Examining the Mediating Role of Coping in the Differential Associations of Affective and Motivational States with Affective Spillover

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Presented at the 2nd Canadian Conference on Positive Psychology, July 18th, 2014
Understand simultaneous contribution of goal motivation and affective states in predicting coping with academic stressors.

In turn, examine the contribution of coping strategies on affective experience.
"Cognitive and behavioural actions used by individuals to manage stress that is perceived as exceeding the resources of the person, while minimizing its emotional impact" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).
Disengagement-oriented strategies: emotional venting, behavioural disengagement, and denial.

Orient one’s attention away from the task.

Predict poor adjustment to college and greater distress when managing a stressful situation.
Coping

- **Task-oriented coping**: active coping, planning, increased effort, positive reappraisal, and relaxation.

- Generate a sense of mastery and control

- Predicts increases in achievement, optimism, and well-being, positive affect.
Positive Affect

- Pride, joy, interest, love
- Patterns of thought to enhance cognitive flexibility and creativity (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002)
Negative Affect

- Worry, dislike, guilt
- Narrows scope of attention and can impair social and cognitive development (Fredrickson, 2001)
Broaden-and-build theory
(Fredrickson, 2001)

- **Pleasurable engagement** - positive affect should fuel ability to cope with stressful and negative situations in a more task-oriented manner.

- **Unpleasurable engagement** - negative affect should fuel the impulse to disengage from stressor.
Self-Concordance Model
(Sheldon & Elliot, 1999)

- **Autonomous motivation:** goals pursued in respect with a person’s intrinsic values, interests, passions and beliefs

- **Controlled motivation:** goals pursued in order to avoid guilt and/or in order to obtain or avoid something in return
How can key assumptions of the Self-Concordance Model and the Broaden-and-Built Theory help us better understand academic coping?

How can affect reciprocate through coping during an academic semester?
Hypothesis 1a

Task Coping

Positive Affect

Autonomous Motivation
Hypothesis 1b

- Disengagement Coping
- Controlled Motivation
- Negative Affect
Hypothesis 2a

Task coping → Positive Affect
Hypothesis 2b

Disengagement coping → Negative Affect
Hypothesis 4a

Positive Affect

Task coping

Positive Affect

Autonomous Motivation
Hypothesis 4b

Negative Affect

Disengagement coping

Controlled Motivation

Negative Affect
Method

- Short-term prospective study

- Following students before the first set of midterm exams (early October; Time 1) and after the second set of midterm exams (late November; Time 2.)

- The sample included 272 students (79% females and 21% males)
  - 163 completed both the Time 1 and the Time 2 questionnaires, yielding a retention rate of 64%.
Results

Positive Affect

Autonomous Motivation

Negative Affect

Controlled Motivation

Task coping

Positive Affect

Disengagement coping

Negative Affect
Conclusions

Fredrickson’s (2001) *spillover hypothesis*:
- Enhanced psychological resilience from positive affective states are more likely to demonstrate subsequent increases in positive affect.

Positive affect + autonomous goals:
- Complementary resources to facilitate a broadened form of self-regulatory effort when facing stressful situations.
Future work:

Determine if a sequence from task-oriented coping via goal progress could mediate the relation between autonomous goal motivation and change in positive affect states.
Upward spiral towards emotional well-being (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Translate to psychoeducational interventions?
Acknowledgements

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

Patrick Gaudreau and Alexandre Gareau
References

References


