



# Goal Characteristics and Well-being in a Vulnerable Population



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## INTRODUCTION

- Personal goals give facilitate meaning and structure in one's lives
- Goals are also necessary for understanding and fostering well-being in individuals (Austin & Vancouver, 1996)
- Particularly important for well-being is both accomplishing personal goals and feelings as if one is capable of attaining important goals
- Both the belief in holding attainable goals and actually accomplishing goals are positively associated with well-being
- The association of personal goal characteristics and psychological well-being is less understood in at-risk populations

## METHODS

- The final sample consisted of 164 emancipated youth as part of the "Adapting to Aging Out" Study
- Participants were recruited from the California foster care system
- Measurements occurred at baseline, twelve months after baseline, and thirty months after baseline
- Participants were asked to think about goals they would like to achieve over the next year, five years, and twenty years
- Participants rated (on a 1 to 5 scale) the likelihood that they would accomplish each goal
- At a follow up participants reported whether they had actually attained that goal

## MEASURES

- Psychological well-being was assessed using three measures
- Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Steer, & Browne, 1996)
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)
- Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, et al., 1985)

## Modeling Strategy

- Because observations were nested within participants, multilevel modeling was used
- In separate models, well-being was predicted by perceived likelihood of attaining goals and the actual attainment of goals
- Gender and time of assessment were added as covariates
- Level One Model:  $Y_{ij} = b_{0j} + b_{1j}(\text{Goal Characteristic}) + b_{2j}(\text{Time}) + e_{ij}$
- Level Two Model:  $b_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}(\text{Gender}) + u_{0j}$ ;  $b_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$ ;  $b_{2j} = \gamma_{20}$
- Mixed Model:  $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}(\text{Gender}) + \gamma_{10}(\text{Goal Characteristic}) + \gamma_{20}(\text{Time}) + u_{0j} + e_{ij}$

Parameter	Depression				Self-esteem				Satisfaction with Life			
	Likelihood Model		Success Model		Likelihood Model		Success Model		Likelihood Model		Success Model	
	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI	Estimate	95% CI
<b>Fixed Effects</b>												
Intercept, $\gamma_{00}$	2.77***	2.37, 3.16	2.11***	1.95, 2.27	2.77***	2.37, 3.16	2.11***	1.95, 2.27	2.37***	1.07, 3.66	3.65***	3.14, 4.16
Likelihood, $\gamma_{10}$	-.14**	-.24, -.04	-	-	.15	-.05, .35	-	-	.43*	.08, .75	-	-
Success, $\gamma_{10}$	-	-	-.06	-.26, .14	-	-	.59**	.21, .97	-	-	.77*	.10, 1.43
Time, $\gamma_{20}$	.12***	.08, .16	.20***	.13, .27	-.01	-.08, .06	-.03	-.15, .09	.02	-.13, .17	-.01	-.23, .21
Gender, $\gamma_{01}$	.17**	.05, .29	.19*	.04, .34	.08	-.19, .35	.13	-.18, .44	-.06	-.47, .35	-.12	-.62, .38

## CONCLUSIONS

- Perceiving goals as attainable predicted life satisfaction and depression
- Actual attainment of goals predict self-esteem and life satisfaction
- These results converge with previous research identifying a relationship between goal characteristics and psychological well-being (Austin & Vancouver, 1996)
- An understanding of the goals of individuals can help researchers foster psychological well-being, even among populations that are at greater risk than the general population

## REFERENCES

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