Establishing construct validity for a measure of dispositional helping preferences, looking at *regulatory focus*, *time perspective*, and *adult attachment*

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Introduction

→ Theory on helping has previously distinguished between efforts by a helper to "provide the recipient with the tools to solve their problems" (*autonomy-oriented* help) or "providing the recipient with the full solution" (*dependency-oriented* help) during a helping interaction (Nadler, 2002).

→ Prior research examining the implications of autonomy- and dependency-oriented help has focused on the *situational conditions under which* and the *individuals for whom* each type of help is likely to be provided or accepted, and its consequences for a broad range of outcomes relevant to the prosocial domain.

→ The researchers in this project are aiming to create a straightforward individual-difference measure that captures **dispositional** orientations towards providing autonomy-oriented and/or dependency-oriented help.

→ For the purposes of establishing convergent and discriminant validity, we not only considered constructs obviously related to the helping context, but also individual differences not directly related to helping (i.e., regulatory focus, time perspective, and adult attachment) that should nonetheless be relevant.

Background

→ In our factor analyses, we consistently discovered three factors in our measure rather than the hypothesized two factors: autonomy helping orientation, dependency helping orientation, and general opposition to helping.

→ In another set of analyses not covered here, we established predictive validity by finding the expected pattern of correlations between our factors and both 1) interest in and 2) perceived effectiveness of hypothetical autonomy- and dependency-oriented charities. See Maki et al. (under revision) for details.

References

Higgins, E. T., Friedman, R. S., Harlow, R. E., Idson, L. C., Ayduk, O. N., Taylor, A. (2001). Achievement orientations from subjective histories of success: Promotion pride versus prevention pride. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 31*, 3-23.

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The Helping Orientations Inventory (sample items)

Autonomy Helping Orientation

1. Teaching people to take care of themselves is good for society because it makes them independent.
2. The goal of helping should be to make sure people can eventually take care of their own needs.
3. I like to help individuals develop the skills and knowledge to help themselves.

Dependency Helping Orientation

1. The goal of helping should be to make sure that people have their immediate needs met.
2. In general, solving other people's problems for them is good for society because it helps meet immediate needs.
3. All people deserve help equally regardless of their personality and life circumstances.

Opposition to Helping

1. In general, solving other people's problems for them is bad for society because they come to expect it in the future.
2. Helping can weaken society because it divides society into those who can help and those who need help.
3. Solving other people's problems for them makes their situation worse in the long run.

Methods

Participants were 486 students (gender: 344 F, 134 M, 8 other; age: M = 20.03, *SD* = 3.31) at a large public university in Minnesota.

Regulatory focus (Higgins et al., 2001)
→ There are two distinct chronic motivational dimensions along which individuals can pursue their goals. Promotion focus emphasizes advancement, and people high in promotion focus are primarily motivated by achievement and maximizing gains. Prevention focus emphasizes security, and people high in prevention focus are primarily motivated by safety and minimizing losses.

Time perspective (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999)
→ Individuals can differ on their general attitude towards time, which then manifests itself in decision making and behavior. Present-hedonistic orientation is a focus on the immediate situation, prioritizing pleasure due to a lack of motivation to consider long-term consequences. Present-fatalistic orientation is also a focus on the immediate situation, but prioritizing short-term outcomes due to a belief that the future is uncontrollable. Future orientation is a focus on the long-term consequences of behavior, prioritizing expected outcomes rather than the current situational reality.

Adult attachment (Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996)
→ Based on prior experiences with attachment figures, individuals can differ in their orientation towards how they approach their relationships. Those high in avoidance are uncomfortable with closeness, and thus become aloof and "distancing" in times of threat. Those high in anxiety fear rejection and abandonment by their partners, and thus become hyperattentive and "smothering" in times of threat.

Results and Discussion

	Autonomy	Dependency	Opposition
Promotion Focus	.282 / .000	.094 / .039	-.117 / .010
Prevention Focus	.009 / .847	.007 / .877	-.150 / .001
Present-Hedonistic	-.074 / .106	.045 / .325	.165 / .000
Present-Fatalistic	-.020 / .663	.161 / .000	.199 / .000
Future Orientation	.239 / .000	.124 / .007	,041 / .376
Attachment Avoidance	-.054 / .242	.079 / .082	.152 / .001
Attachment Anxiety	-.021 / .650	.068 / .138	.102 / .026

We found evidence for convergent and discriminant validity:
1) Both promotion- and prevention-focused people supported the idea of helping, but only promotion-focused people supported active efforts to help, 2) present-oriented people were opposed to helping (i.e., a future-oriented behavior) but present-fatalistic people are at least willing to support dependency-oriented helping, while future-oriented people were not opposed to helping and were especially likely to support autonomy-oriented helping, and 3) insecurely attached people (both avoidant and anxious) opposed helping in general.

→ Future research must 1) establish convergent and discriminant validity with other relevant constructs and 2) establish predictive validity with actual helping behavior (instead of just intention).