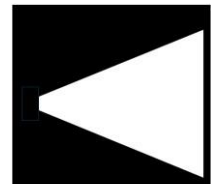


Future Me



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Research Papers

Chu, C., & Lowery, B. S. (2024). Perceiving a stable self-concept enables the experience of meaning in life. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 50(5), 780-792.

Overview

This research explores how perceiving a stable self-concept across time (future self-continuity) enables individuals to experience a sense of Meaning In Life (MIL). The authors argue that future self-continuity fosters self-certainty, which enhances coherence, purpose, and significance in life. They developed and tested an intervention to manipulate future self-continuity and examined its effects on self-certainty and MIL.

Key Findings & Insights

Study 1 (N=1,182, nationally representative):

Higher self-continuity predicted greater MIL ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$) and self-certainty ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$). Mediation analysis showed that self-certainty explained the effect of self-continuity on MIL

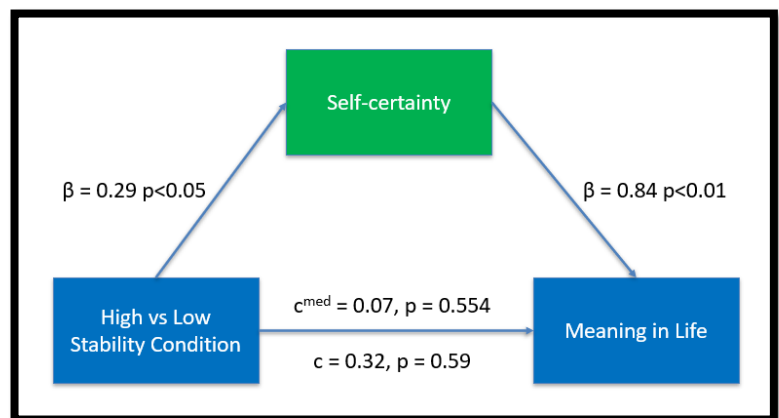
Study 2a & 2b (N=700 across studies):

Participants wrote about either an expected (high stability) or surprising (low stability) future self.

Those in the intervention about an expected future self, increased self-continuity ($d = 0.74$, $p < 0.001$), self-certainty ($d = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$), and MIL ($d = 0.22$, $p = 0.036$).

Study 3 (N=326):

Replicated the intervention, demonstrating that higher self-continuity led to greater MIL via self-certainty



Methods

Participants in the intervention condition wrote about their expected future self, focusing on a stable and familiar identity, while the control group wrote about a surprising and unfamiliar future self.

Measures included:

Future Self-Continuity Scale rated overlap between current and future selves.

Self-Certainty Scale with items such as "I have a clear sense of who I am".

MIL Scale covering coherence, purpose, and significance in life.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that fostering a sense of future self-continuity increases MIL by enhancing self-certainty. The novel intervention, writing about an expected future self, provides a simple and effective method for promoting psychological well-being. These findings emphasise the importance of self-concept stability in understanding and enhancing the experience of MIL.

Practical Implication: Encouraging individuals to reflect on a consistent and coherent future self may be a useful strategy in therapeutic and developmental contexts to strengthen MIL and self-understanding.

