



Academic identity, self-efficacy, and self-esteem predict self-determined motivation and goals



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ABSTRACT

We conducted the first tests of implicit academic identity (social versus studious) in relation to explicit academic identity (social versus studious), self-efficacy and self-esteem as predictors of self-determined motivation and goals (performance and learning). In Study 1, 366 undergraduates completed measures of implicit social/studious identity and implicit attitude towards social/studious domains along with explicit social/studious identity, academic self-efficacy, and self-determined motivation. In Study 2, 128 undergraduates completed implicit measures of social/studious identity, implicit self-esteem, and explicit measures of self-esteem, and goals (performance and learning). Our results offer the first evidence of significant correspondence between implicit and explicit academic identity and the unique, incremental contributions of implicit measures beyond explicit measures in explaining self-determined motivation and goal orientation. We also establish that socially oriented students have lower academic self-efficacy, lower self-determined motivation, and a preference for performance goals; studiously oriented students report higher self-esteem and a preference for learning goals.

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1. Introduction

College years offer a time to forge new identities. Although there are many dimensions along which students can shape their central identity, we examined two identities that may be particularly salient for motivation and goal striving: 1) 'scholars' invested in academic work and 2) 'socializers' invested in interpersonal and group socializing. Do these identities influence students' self-efficacy, self-esteem and motivation? Do students who identify more strongly as 'scholars' have different goals and motivations than do 'socializers'? We attempted to answer these questions by examining college students' implicit and explicit identities as 'scholars' or 'socializers' in relation to academic self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-determined motivation and goals (performance and learning).

2. Relevant prior research

2.1. Implicit and explicit academic identity

Implicit identities are typically hidden from conscious awareness, expressed more automatically, and are less susceptible to influences exerted by impression management or social desirability (Baron & Banaji, 2006). In contrast, explicit identities tend to be within conscious

awareness and likely to be expressed more deliberately. Similarly, implicit attitudes shaped by preverbal emotional experiences and established early in life tend to be accurate predictors of longer term behavioral patterns, whereas explicit attitudes are shaped largely by cognitive content and cultural norms and are better at predicting specific behaviors in immediate contexts (Baron & Banaji, 2006; Rudman, 2004). For instance, it has been found that implicit responses, as measured by the Implicit Associations Test (IAT), predict natural or spontaneous behavior and explicit self-report ratings predict behavior that is more deliberate or controlled (Asendorpf, Banse, & Mücke, 2002).

Although implicit attitudes are moderately correlated with explicit attitudes (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002), some researchers consider them to be more independent and dissociated (Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell, & Kardes, 1986). Research findings regarding the relative strength of implicit and explicit measures in predicting behavior remain inconsistent and less is known about how and when they come together or diverge in predicting behavior. Hence, we investigated the relative contributions of implicit and explicit academic preferences as predictors of students' self-determined motivation and goal orientation.

2.2. Academic identity and motivation

Research regarding identity-based motivation and the influential role of possible selves (Oyserman & James, 2011; Oyserman, 2012; Oyserman & Destin, 2010) suggests that academic identities can be motivating when an aspirational self feels relevant in the academic classroom and when individuals experience environments that match their

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sense of self. For instance, when individuals believe their identity and actions are congruent they tend to persist longer at a challenging task because they find it to be meaningful and significant (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). On the other hand, if individuals are performing actions that they believe are incongruent with their identity they are more likely to give up when they encounter difficulties. Thus, identity congruence has the potential to influence students' academic choices (such as attending class) or behaviors (asking questions in class, or studying for a test). For example, Oyserman and Destin (2010) reported that although almost 90% of students from urban schools in low-income areas see themselves as being college educated, they do not have an education-dependent identity or a context that evokes such an identity; hence, they are less likely to pursue a college education. Similarly, Devos and Cruz Torres (2007) found that Latino students tend to implicitly self-identify as low achievers when they have strong identification with their ethnic group and associate it with low-achieving stereotypes. In contrast, Latino students implicitly identify as high achievers if they have strong identification with significant others who are viewed as high achievers. Thus, for Latino students, identification with academic endeavors is predicted by a function of their ethnic identity and the academic achievement of significant others.

The motivating influence of academic identity is also apparent in results showing that first generation college students obtain better grades after experiencing a match between their sense of self (independent or interdependent) and the university's culture (which is more independent), even after controlling for SAT scores and race (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). Likewise, the negative consequences of identity mismatches are evident when women who implicitly associate math more strongly with men show a weaker preference for math, less identification with it, less skill, less engagement and more anxiety in math-related activities (Nosek & Smyth, 2011). Fortunately, implicit identity appears to be malleable, as women who come into contact with a role model with whom they can identify, feel more confident and efficacious, show increased class participation, seek help from instructors after class, and report more awareness of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) careers (Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger, & McManus, 2011). Thus, implicit identity measures appear to capture and reflect subtle and complex aspects of the self such as influences from early experiences and messages received from family, teachers, or peers and these seem to have motivating influences.

2.3. Self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-determined motivation, and goals

In addition to the motivational influence of academic identity, researchers have also examined academic self-efficacy (academic self-confidence) and self-esteem (self-worth) in relation to academic motivation assessed as self-determined motivation and goals (performance and mastery). Although there is evidence of a robust relationship between self-efficacy and achievement, we need a more thorough understanding of the proximal mechanisms that explain how and why self-efficacy influences the motivation to pursue academic goals (Zimmerman, 2000). Self-determination theory explains how and why individuals may differ in their academic motivation as it views motivation as a continuum with high intrinsic motivation and amotivation on both ends and extrinsic motivation located in the middle (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to this theory, by satisfying three innate needs that include feeling competent by successfully meeting challenges, feeling autonomous from having choices, and feeling connected to others in caring relationships, individuals experience a stronger sense of self-determination, 'agency,' and greater intrinsic motivation (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Self-determination theory's basic theoretical constructs are operationalized by the Academic Motivation Scale, and empirical evidence suggests that students who feel more competent (high academic self-efficacy) tend to experience greater self-determined motivation and show greater persistence; in contrast, amotivated students have the least self-determination and are more apathetic and

disengaged (Vallerand, 2000; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992; Vallerand et al., 1992). High academic self-efficacy and implicit beliefs about the changeable/malleable quality of intelligence are associated with stronger motivation, greater concentration, and deeper processing of study material (Ommundsen, Haugen, & Lund, 2005). Individuals who internalize achievement goals display greater self-regulation and self-directed behaviors that are associated with enhanced learning and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Further, priming individuals with relevant implicit intrinsic and extrinsic cues has been found to influence motivation for performance behaviors (Levesque, Copeland, & Sutcliffe, 2008).

Regarding self-esteem and motivation, although there is some confirmation that a positive academic identity develops from prior successful academic experiences, there is an ongoing debate about the reciprocity of this relationship as evidence also exists in support of a positive self-concept leading to successful experiences (Wigfield & Wagner, 2005). Further, good performance in school has been shown to lead to higher self-esteem, whereas self-esteem has shown no impact on academic achievement suggesting that some aspects of this relationship are still unclear (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). In addition, self-esteem along with family support appears to be important for learning and achievement (Sergio, Cuestas, & Fenollar, 2008) and others hint at an indirect relationship between self-esteem and emotional/social problems which may lead to attrition (Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003). Thus, the relationship between self-esteem and motivation remains riddled with questions that need to be answered more completely.

Research regarding sense of self and motivation measured via academic goals suggests that students are motivated by different cues within the same environment (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). For instance, individuals who feel competent (high self-efficacy) are driven by performance-approach goals and those who feel less competent and worry that they will perform poorly are driven by performance-avoidance goals (Law, Elliot, & Murayama, 2012). Likewise, students pursuing performance goals tend to believe that those who have high ability do not need to work hard and having to work hard implies that a student is not very gifted. In contrast, students pursuing learning goals feel motivated to put forth effort and view this as a path for manifesting their ability (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Consequently, learning more about the complex way in which academic identity, academic self-efficacy, and self-esteem are related to self-determined motivation and goals (learning and performance) would be valuable for educators as they seek to improve student motivation.

2.4. Current studies

In Study 1, our aim was to understand the nature and role of students' academic identity, attitude towards scholarly pursuits, and self-efficacy in predicting self-determined motivation. To achieve this, we performed the first tests of 'studious' versus 'social' academic identity using both implicit (automatic) and explicit (conscious) measures of identity and attitude in relation to self-determined motivation. Next, in Study 2, we built on the first study by including implicit and explicit measures of self-esteem along with implicit and explicit academic identity and also sought a deeper understanding of the relationship between academic identity and academic motivation by using a measure of goal orientation (performance and learning). Common to both studies, we examined implicit and explicit identity as the predictors and motivation as the outcome. We assessed implicit preferences and attitudes by using the Implicit Associations Test (IAT), a popular and widely used method for measuring the strength of implicit associations (Devos & Cruz Torres, 2007; Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009; Nosek et al., 2002). The IAT operates on the assumption that it is effective in accessing information that is activated automatically or involuntarily and is less vulnerable to attempts at faking, impression management, or self-deception. Comprehensive reviews evaluating implicit measures including the IAT (Fazio & Olson, 2003; Fiedler, Messner, & Bluemke,

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