

Datum: 13.3.2013  
Ort: Binzmühlestrasse 14, Raum BIN 3.D.27  
Uhrzeit: 12.30 –13.30Uhr

Titel: It's in the focus- The role of goal focus for procrastination

Referent: Kathrin Krause, Angewandte Psychologie: Life-Management

Abstract:

One of the riddles of human nature is the question, why we often do not pursue a goal and do not engage in an activity even though we have decided in favor of it and know it would be best for us (Sansone & Thoman, 2005). Procrastination, a common phenomenon in academic contexts, is defined as the subjectively aversive inability to initiate or complete the pursuit of a given goal (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). In my talk, I present a dynamic model that centers on the role of goal focus during goal pursuit for procrastination. The model hypothesizes that focusing on the means of goal pursuit (process focus) reduces procrastination, particularly when fear of failure is high. In contrast, when means are perceived as unpleasant (high task aversiveness), focusing more on the outcome of goal pursuit should reduce procrastination while highlighting the importance of goal achievement.

In this talk I will present two studies examining the hypotheses. Study 1 was a scenario study and tested whether psychology students ( $N = 92$ ) who focus on the process of studying expect to procrastinate less than students who focus on the outcome. Results of a path model showed that adopting a process focus was negatively associated with fear of failure ( $r = -.44$ ) and with procrastination ( $r = -.32$ ;  $\chi^2 = 25.84$  ( $df=24$ ),  $p = .04$ ; CFI = 1.0; RMSEA = .03).

Study 2, a short-term longitudinal study encompassing six weeks and nine measurement occasions with ( $N = 50$ ) students preparing for an exam, aimed at clarifying the relationship between process focus and procrastination. As expected, procrastination decreased over time when students were more process focused. Contrary to hypotheses, however, fear of failure or task aversiveness did not moderate the relationship between process focus and procrastination. In line with previous research (Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002) this study also showed that procrastination decreased with an approaching deadline.

The current studies provide first evidence supporting our dynamic model of goal focus and procrastination.

References:

- Ariely, D., & Wertenbroch, K. (2002). Procrastination, deadlines, and performance: Self-control by precommitment. *Psychological Science*, *13*, 219–224. doi: 10.1111/1467-9280.00441
- Sansone, C. & Thoman, D. B. (2005). Interest as the missing motivator in self-regulation. *European Psychologist*, *10*, 175-186. doi:10.1027/1016-9040.10.3.175
- Solomon, L. J., & Rothblum, E. D. (1984). Academic procrastination: Frequency and cognitive-behavioral correlates. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *31*, 503–509. doi:10.1037//0022-0167.31.4.503