Understanding Conflicting Personal Strivings and Social Anxiety: A focus on emotion regulation, avoidance, and interpersonal relationships.

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Introduction

- Personal strivings are life aims that influence everyday behavior (Emmons, 1986).

- Self-regulation (i.e., a person's ability to control their thoughts, emotions, and actions) are allocated towards pursuing these goals (Emmons, 1986).

- Self-regulation draws from a limited resource, acting like strength or energy (Baumeister et al., 1998).

- Pursuing certain types of strivings may be mentally taxing because they require considerable self-regulation.

- If a striving requires a lot of self-regulation, there may few resources left to use towards other strivings. Thus, when people pursue multiple strivings at once, strivings might conflict with one another.

- Yet, the content of strivings aren't the only factors that influence conflict; individual differences may also play a role.

- A person's amount of social anxiety, characterized by excessive concern about being scrutinized and negatively evaluated by other people, may be detrimental to pursuing personal strivings (Goodman et al., 2019).

- The aim of this study is to examine the relative conflict caused by different types of strivings and how this conflict differs between people with varying levels of social anxiety.

- We focused on types of strivings most relevant to social anxiety: emotion regulation, avoidance, and interpersonal relationships.

Hypotheses

- H1: Emotion regulation, avoidance, and interpersonal strivings will be associated with more conflict than non-emotion regulation, non- avoidance, and non-interpersonal strivings.
- H2: Social anxiety symptoms will moderate the relationships between strivings type and strivings conflict. For people higher in social anxiety symptoms, emotion regulation, avoidance, and interpersonal strivings will be associated with conflict to a greater degree than people lower in social anxiety symptoms.

Participant Demographics

- 303 community adults from the Washington D.C. area
- Mean age = 31.3 years
- Age range = 18-81 years
- 66% Female, 34% Male
- White (47.1%), Asian/Pacific Islander (20%), African American (14.2%), Latino/Hispanic (8.4%), Arab/Middle Eastern (3.5%), and Other (6.8%)
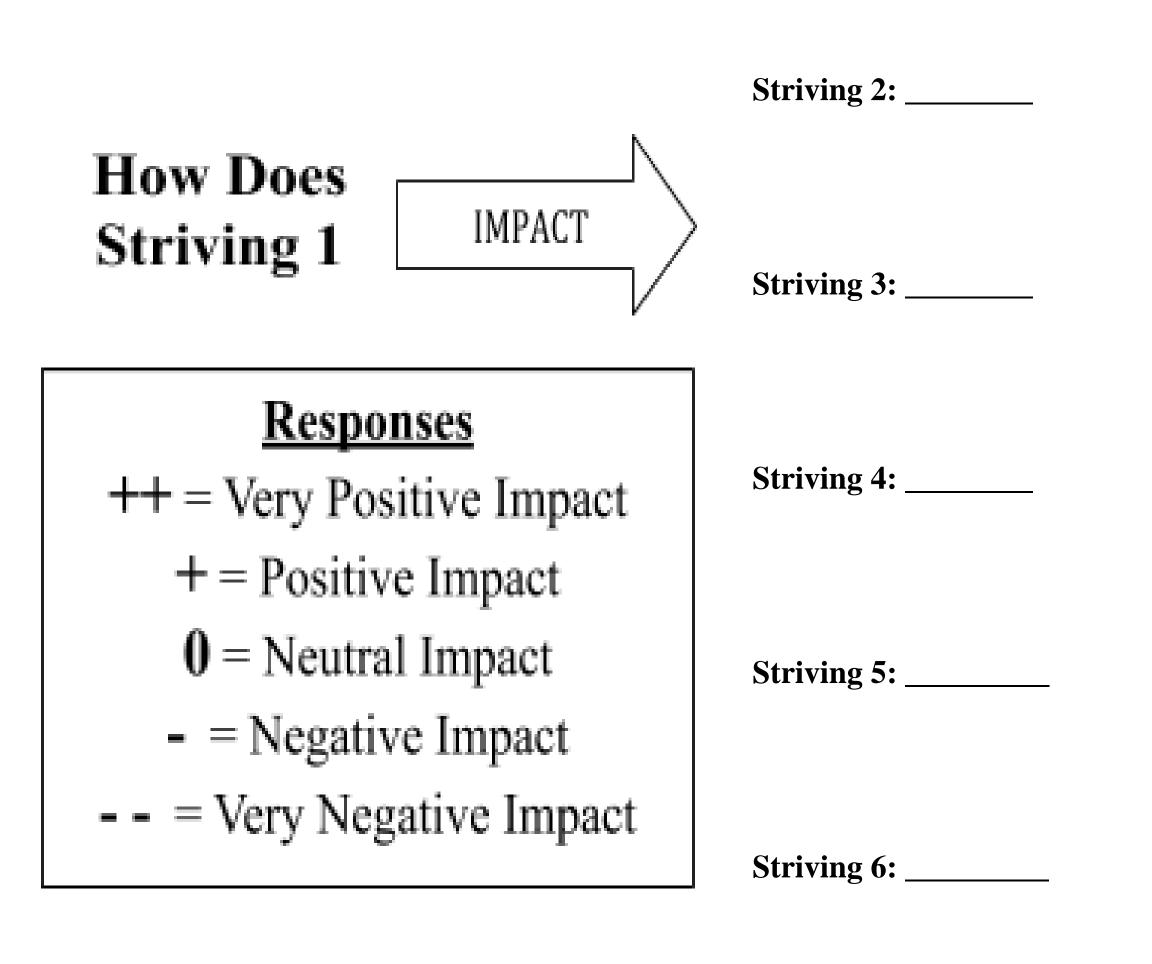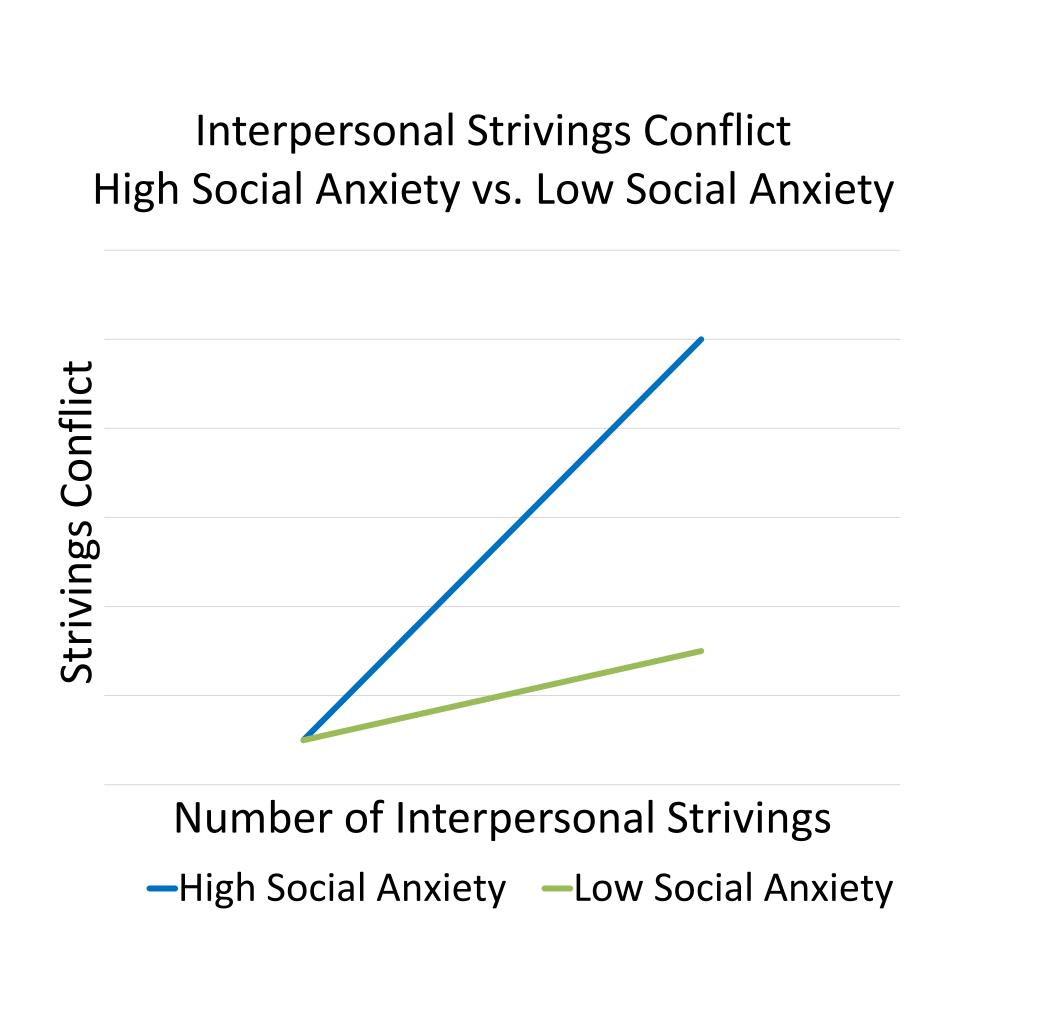

Figure 1. Measuring Strivings Conflict.

Figure 2. Graph of Predicted Moderation.

Procedures

1. Participants provided informed consent.
2. Completed baseline measures (i.e., Social Anxiety Interaction Scale) (Mattick & Clarke, 1998).
3. Listed their six most important personal strivings.
4. Rated how much each striving conflicted with one another.
5. Were compensated with $50 Amazon gift cards.

Planned Analysis

- Our data hierarchically is structured with strivings as (level 1) nested within persons (level 2).
- We will run multilevel analyses in R Statistical Software using *lme4* and *lmerTest* packages.
- Results will be evaluated with significance testing ($p < .05$), direction of effect, and confidence intervals.

Conclusions

- This study is a first step in understanding how and why people's life aims may conflict with one another.

- The results may help us gain a better understanding about how elevated social anxiety is detrimental to everyday life, behavior, and goal pursuit.

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