

Aspiring, Acquiring, and Retiring: What We Know and Where We Could Go with Goal Content Theory Research

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Goal Contents Theory (GCT) has become a trusted lens for understanding how people's aspirations shape their well-being. This talk will begin with an overview of what we have learned from GCT research, focusing primarily on recent meta-analytic evidence a meta-analysis of GCT ($k = 92, N = 70,110$) that the benefits of intrinsic aspiring and the costs of extrinsic aspiring may be universal. The address will then turn to new and exciting research that could steer GCT in novel directions. Of particular interest will be research focusses on what happens when we reflect on our intrinsic and extrinsic accomplishments. The focus of GCT research has tended to be on what we aspire for in the future, but what are the aftereffects of the intrinsic and extrinsic goals we have already accomplished? In answer to this question, I will review evidence about the consequences of reflecting on one's intrinsic and extrinsic accomplishments, paying special attention to how those effects may be particularly relevant to adults in late life. I will also outline emerging evidence that the acquisition of extrinsic goals is something of a "double-edged sword", with links to both basic psychological need satisfaction *and* basic psychological need frustration. My goal for this presentation is to convey that, despite the passing of 30 years and the publication of hundreds of empirical studies, what we have learned from GCT may still be just the beginning. I hope this talk is an exciting opportunity to explore the latest developments in GCT research, and to connect with others who are passionate about understanding the myriad ways our aspirations shape our lives.