

**RAISING THE BAR: A LONGITUDINAL EXAMINATION OF THE ANTECEDENTS OF POSITIVE
DISCREPANCY PRODUCTION**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined motivational mechanisms involved in discrepancy production, or "raising the bar" when setting personal goals over time. While theories such as social cognitive theory, control theory, and expectancy theory have been used to predict discrepancy production, there are still questions involving the antecedents of discrepancy production. It was hypothesized that discrepancy production will be (a) positively associated with self-efficacy, (b) inversely related to negative self-affect (performance dissatisfaction and worry), (c) positively related to valence, and (d) positively related to instrumentality. Data were collected biweekly from 147 undergraduate students over a 10 week period. Results indicated that (a) discrepancy production occurred 51.1% of the time on the second observation, 61.6% at Time 3, and 67.3% at Time 4, (b) self-efficacy moderated the relationship between performance worry and discrepancy production, (c) valence moderated the relationship between worry and discrepancy production, and (d) dissatisfaction with performance was a significant predictor of increased discrepancy production. Implications and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: *Motivation; Discrepancy Production; Social Cognitive Theory; Control Theory; Self-Efficacy, Expectancy Theory*