

Do I have enough?

On the act of assessing one's personal resources

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Avhandlingen för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i psykologi, som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsstyrelsen vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentligens försvaras fredagen den 15 juni 2018, klockan 10:00 i sal F1, Psykologiska institutionen, Haraldsgatan 1, Göteborg.

Opponent: Adel Daoud

Föreliggande avhandling grundar sig på följande artiklar:

- I Einarsdóttir, G., Hansla, A., & Johansson, L.-O. (2018a). The convergent and discriminant validity of the Relative Resource Assessment Scale. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- II Einarsdóttir, G., Hansla, A., & Johansson, L.-O. (2018b). Looking back in order to predict the future: Relative resource assessments and their relationship to future expectations. *Nordic Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1080/19012276.2018.1457452
- III Einarsdóttir, G., Hansla, A., & Johansson, L.-O. (2018c). The value of money: On how childhood economic resources influence value assessments later in life. *Comprehensive Results in Social Psychology*. doi: 10.1080/23743603.2018.1465804



Abstract

Gró Einarsdóttir (2018). Do I have enough? On the act of assessing one's personal resources. Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg, PO Box 500, SE-405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden.

How do people assess their personal resources? This is a fundamental question, since awareness of your current resources is a prerequisite for mobilizing your efforts to secure, sustain, and safeguard resources in the best way possible. However, answering this question requires an understanding of how people evaluate whether they have too little, just enough, or more than enough. I subscribe to the view that being in a state of scarcity, sufficiency, or abundance is the result of a comparative judgment between the resources a person feels in control of and a relevant comparison standard. This theoretical assumption was tested empirically in three studies approaching the subject from different theoretical standpoints, using different methodologies and analysis procedures. In Study I, my colleagues and I evaluated the extent to which reference points influenced the content validity of a newly developed instrument, the Relative Resource Assessment Scale (RRAS). This scale is a generalized measure of personal resources that asks people to use different reference points to evaluate their resources. In Study II, we estimated the influence of different referents on how well the RRAS predicted participants' future outlook. In Study III, we examined whether growing up poor led to individual differences in susceptibility to context effects when ascribing value to different products. Studies I and II revealed that the RRAS measures three distinct but correlated resource factors that we labeled economic, temporal, and socio-emotional resources. Study I also verified that referents influence the assessment of resources, especially economic resources. Study II demonstrated that knowledge about how individuals assess resources in comparison to the past and to other people is useful when predicting future outlook. Finally, although we found little evidence that economic resources in childhood influence susceptibility to contextual cues, we did manage to replicate previous findings demonstrating that contextual cues have a robust impact on resource assessments. Given our findings, it is interesting that referents are often ignored when personal resources are measured. Further, although personal resources are a central concept in psychological research, the field currently lacks an agreed-on measurement. In this thesis, I have tried to conceptualize and measure personal resource assessments. Although these measurements require further development, this thesis highlights that the field is in need of a better measurement method. I believe that a systematic endeavor, preferably following in the footsteps of personality research where a lexical approach was used to create the influential Big Five taxonomy, has the potential to change a straggling field into a vitalized hotbed for accumulating knowledge.

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