



# Hopefulness: Explaining the Link Between Self-Affirmation and Self-Esteem

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## Introduction

- Self-affirmation is a process wherein people compensate for threats to one aspect of their identity (e.g., a failed test threatens one's perceptions that they are intelligent) by reflecting on positive aspects of a different aspect of their identity (e.g., thinking about how one is such a loving sister; Sherman & Cohen, 2006)
- By compensating for threats to their identity, self-affirmers may benefit from increased confidence in their abilities to achieve important goals and outcomes—and experience greater hope (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Tesser, 2000).
- Hope has been linked to accomplishing goals (Snyder, 1995) and self-esteem (Frieson & Frieson, 1997), making it a potentially critical determinant of self-esteem maintenance.
- The present study examines a potential mechanism—hope—that is related to processes linked to self-esteem maintenance.

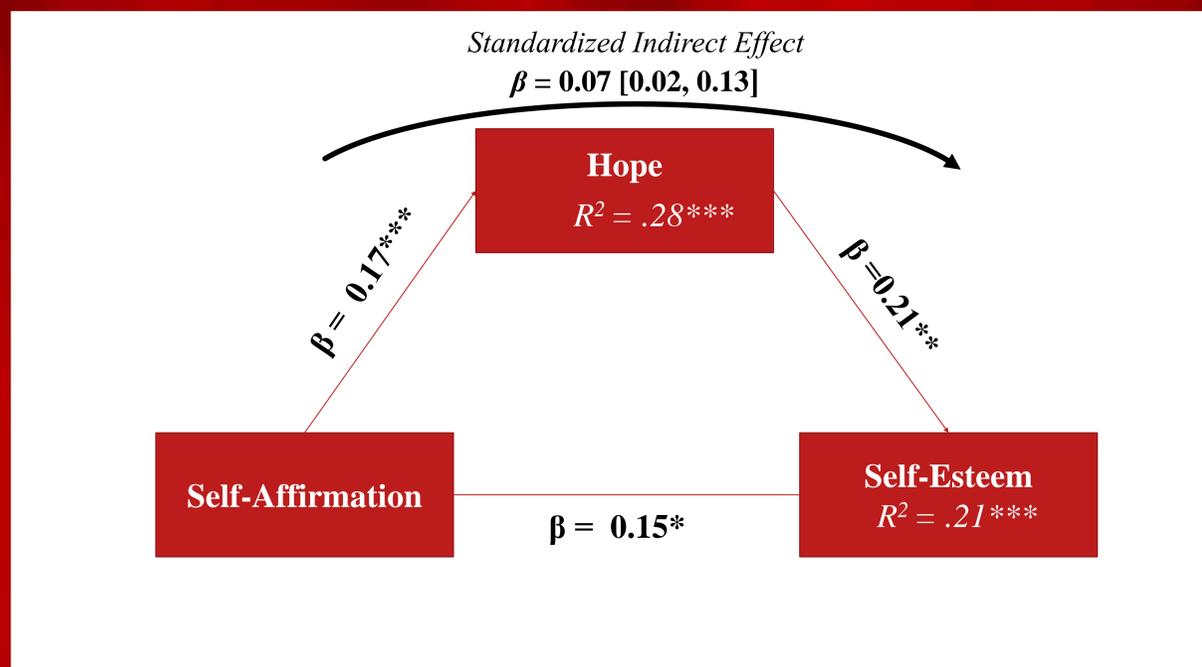


Figure 1. Hope mediation model with 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrapped samples. Standardized parameter estimates presented. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Methods

### Participants

- 184 youth aged 14-21 ( $M = 15.71$ ,  $SD = .95$ )
- 60.3% of youth identified as African American
- Enrolled in the Champaign Area Relationship Education for Youth (CARE4U) program

### Measures

- Self-Affirmation ( $\alpha = .87$ ; Harris et al., 2018)
- Hope ( $\alpha = .80$ ; Snyder, 2002)
- Self-esteem (Ribins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001)
- Loneliness (van Roekel et al., 2018)
- Psychological Distress ( $\alpha = .83$ ; Kessler et al., 2002)

## Results

- Hayes (2018) PROCESS analyses tested direct and indirect effects in our hypothesized model.
- The model accounted for psychological distress and loneliness, which were significantly negatively associated with self-esteem.
- Self-Affirmation directly predicted greater self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
- Indirect effect via hope was also statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.07$ , 95% CI = [0.02, 0.13]).
- The hypothesized model explained 21% of the variance in self-esteem.
- Exploratory regression analyses suggested the strengths domain of self-affirmation was positively associated with hope ( $\beta = .65$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and self-esteem ( $\beta = .45$ ,  $p = .019$ ).

## Discussion

- Reminding one's self of positive aspects of identity may contribute to greater optimism regarding one's ability to achieve one's goals and overcome obstacles—and contribute to greater self-esteem.
- Helping students identify and draw on self-affirmations may assist in positively impacting their evaluations of their current situation and themselves.
- It may be helpful for adolescents to reflect on how their character strengths, values, and important relationships provide them with a sense of hope.