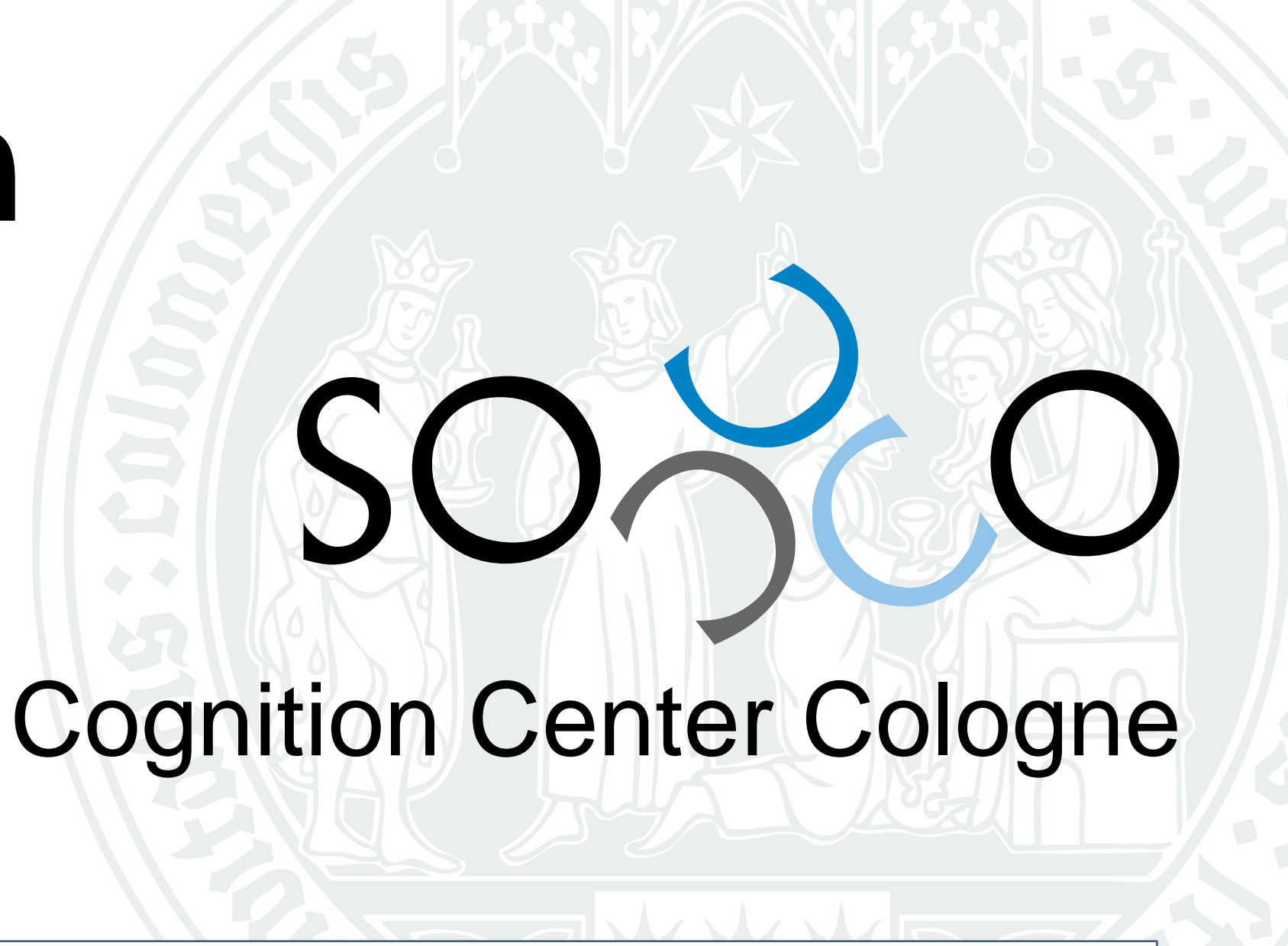


# The Impact of Implicit Theories of Health on Maintaining New Year's Resolutions

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## Background

Implicit theories are peoples beliefs about the changeability versus stability of human traits and attributes (Dweck, 1999).

Perceiving a given attribute as stable is termed *entity theory*, while perceiving this attribute as changeable is termed *incremental theory*.



Holding an incremental theory of health leads to health-promoting attitudes and engaging in healthy behaviors more often (Schreiber, Job, & Dohle, 2018).

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between implicit theories of health and health-related new year's resolutions.

## Method

### Time 1

End of December 2017

$N = 201$  (84.6% female;  $M_{age} = 26.19$ ,  $SD_{age} = 9.38$ )

Participants stated up to 10 new year's resolutions ( $N = 787$ )

- 2 raters coded if these were health-related ( $N = 338$ ,  $\kappa = 0.86$ )

For each resolution participants rated:

- Effort: "In order to implement this resolution, much effort is needed."
- Confidence: "I think it is very likely to implement this resolution."

Implicit Theories of Health Scale (Schreiber et al., 2018):

- 6 items (e.g. "You can change your health status considerably.")
- $\alpha = 0.87$

### Time 2

Beginning of February 2018

$N_{participants} = 180$ ;  $N_{resolutions} = 702$ ;  $N_{health-related} = 305$

For each resolution participants rated:

- Progress: "I have made progress in achieving this resolution so far."
- Effort: "In order to implement this resolution, much effort is needed."
- Confidence: "I think it is very likely to implement this resolution during the rest of the year."
- Persistence: "I will continue to try to reach this resolution."

Implicit Theories of Health Scale (Schreiber et al., 2018):

- $\alpha = 0.91$
- Retest-reliability:  $r = 0.59$

## Results

Dependent Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Implicit theories of health at T1 as predictor</i>					
Number of health-related resolutions (T1)	0.01	0.09	199	0.12	.909
Effort (T1)	0.10	0.11	141.30	0.84	.401
Confidence (T1)	0.25	0.09	168.73	2.73	.007
<i>Implicit theories of health at T1 as predictor</i>					
Progress (T2)	-0.07	0.13	140.91	-0.54	.589
Effort (T2)	0.11	0.12	144.17	0.94	.350
Confidence (T2)	0.17	0.12	154.50	1.46	.146
Persistence (T2)	0.08	0.10	156.96	0.78	.438
<i>Implicit theories of health at T2 as predictor</i>					
Progress (T2)	0.10	0.11	147.63	0.90	.370
Effort (T2)	0.03	0.10	149.58	0.24	.808
Confidence (T2)	0.34	0.10	154.27	3.50	.001
Persistence (T2)	0.31	0.08	159.01	3.91	<.001



## Conclusion

- Holding an incremental theory of health (i.e. perceiving health as malleable) is positively connected to ones' confidences in reaching health-related new year's resolutions.
- An incremental theory of health is also connected to higher self-reported persistence in reaching these resolutions.
- Implicit theories of health vary over time.

- Health interventions should teach an incremental view of health to keep up motivation for fulfilling health-related goals.
- Holding an incremental theory is especially important when one is confronted with setbacks (Burnette & Finkel, 2012).
- Further studies should investigate potential factors that lead to changes in implicit theories of health.

## References

- Burnette, J. L., & Finkel, E. J. (2012). Buffering against weight gain following dieting setbacks: An implicit theory intervention. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48*(3), 721-725.
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