

Making material relevant to motivate students

Helping students find value in what they're learning

Learning Goals:

After today's meeting, TAs should be able to...

- 1) Understand sources of motivation for students and their impact
- 2) Apply strategies to increase student motivation

What motivates someone to learn something new?

The 3 C's of student motivation

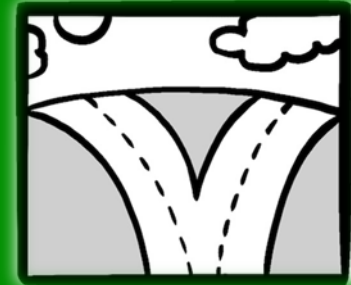
Confidence



Context



Choice



Illustrations by Alexander Braille, used with permission.

The Psychology of Motivation:

Motivation is a function of....

Expectancy

Learners' belief that they can succeed in a given task

Value

Learners' belief that there are direct or indirect benefits in performing the task

Confidence

Context

Choice



Confidence - How can we promote students' beliefs that they can succeed?

Practice

Support &
Feedback

Context - How can we reinforce the value of learning the material?

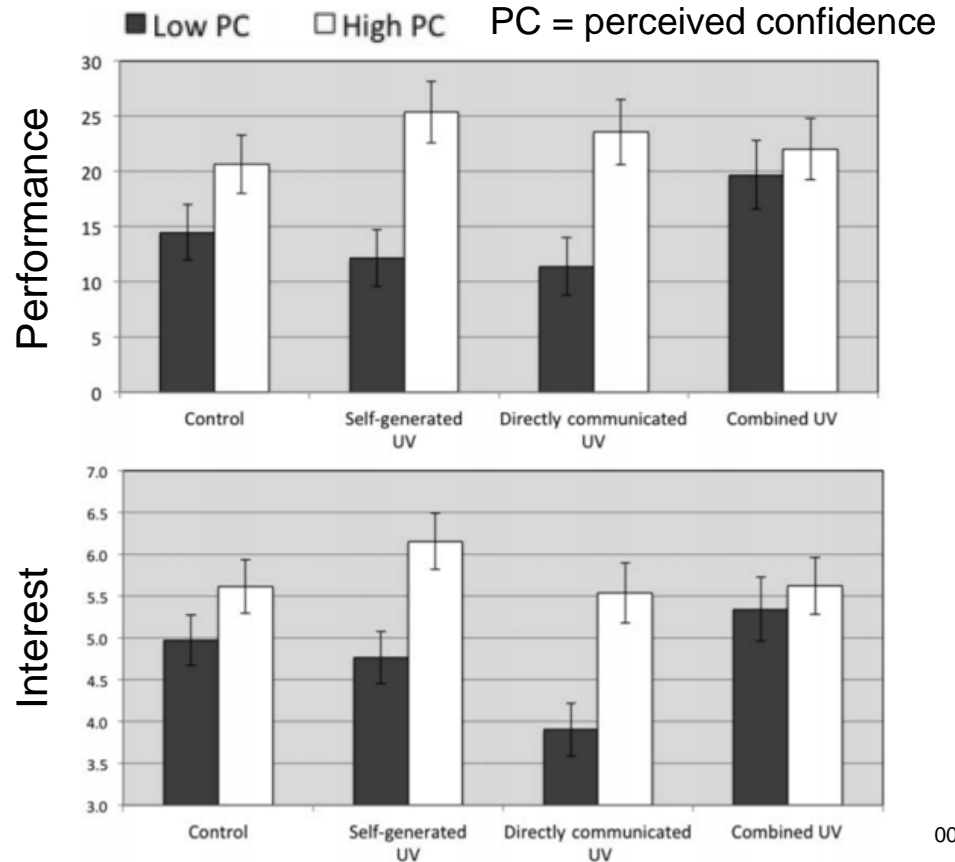
→ Where does value come from?

- intrinsic (the inherent enjoyment of a task)
- utility (the importance or usefulness for other tasks and goals)
- attainment (doing well at the task is important to one's self-concept or identity)
- cost (the negative aspects of engaging in the task, such as lost opportunities)

Which of these should we target as teachers to increase student interest, engagement, and course performance?

Context - How is utility value best communicated?

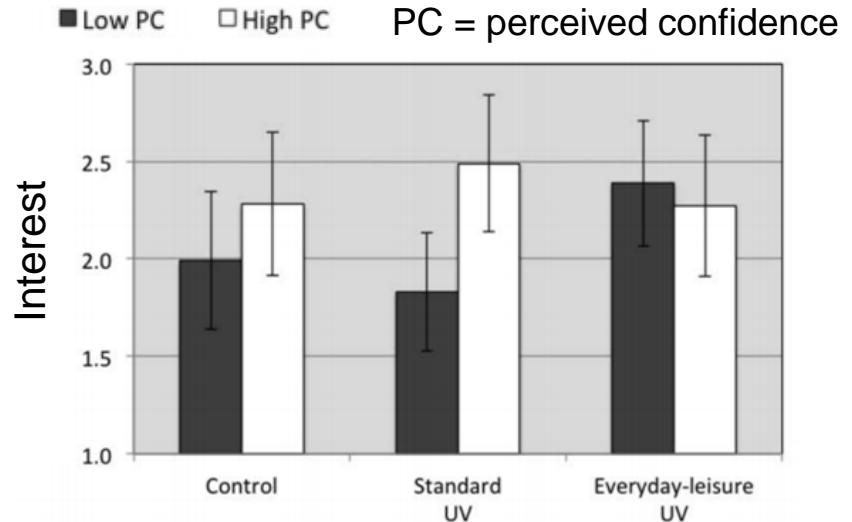
- directly communicated
- self-generated



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Context - How is utility value best communicated?

What type of utility value information should be communicated (e.g. everyday examples, career and school examples, etc.)?



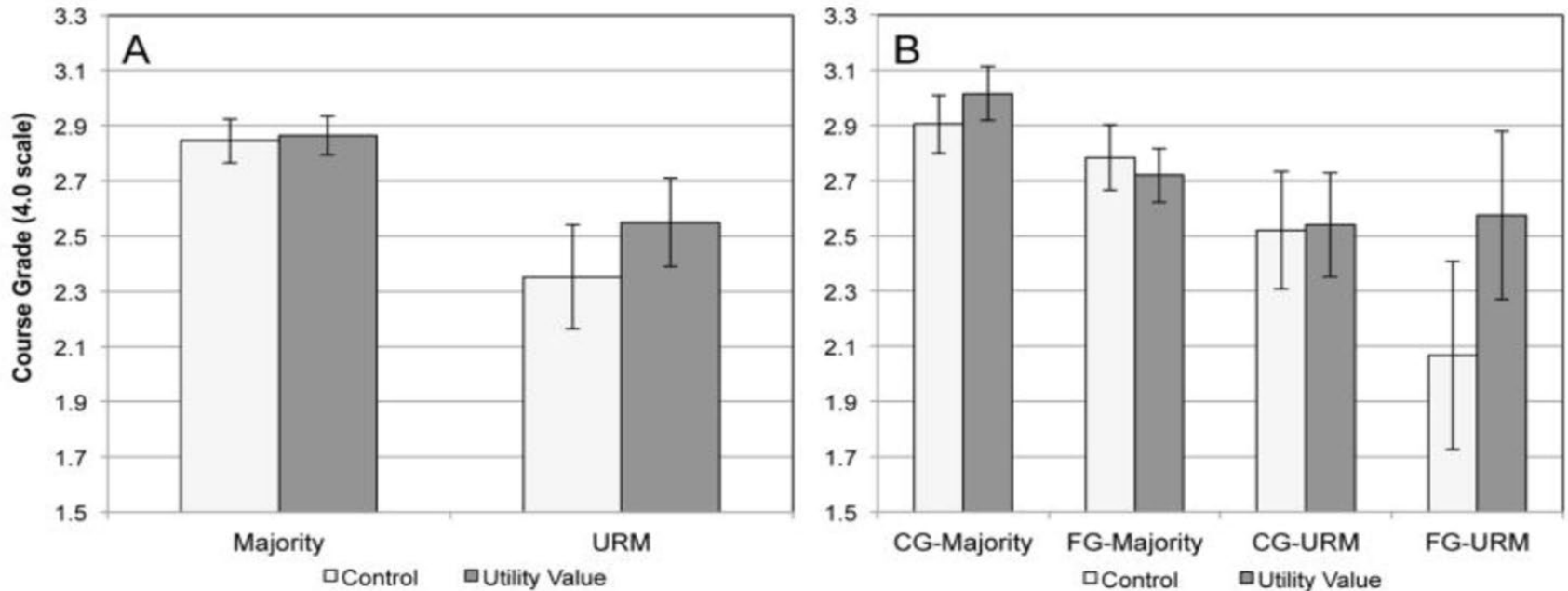
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An example of a simple self-generated utility value intervention

UV: “Select a concept or issue that was covered in lecture and formulate a question. *Write a 1-2 page essay addressing this question and discuss the relevance of the concept or issue to your own life. Be sure to include some concrete information that was covered in this unit, explaining why this specific information is relevant to your life or useful for you. Be sure to explain how the information applies to you personally and give examples.*”

Control: “Select a concept or issue that was covered in lecture and formulate a question. *Select the relevant information from class notes and the textbook, and write a 1–2 page response to your question. You should attempt to organize the material in a meaningful way, rather than simply listing the main facts or research findings. Remember to summarize the material in your own words.*”

What impact does utility value have on folks from minority (URM) or 1st generation (FG) backgrounds?



Choice - How can choice empower our students?

Scenario A - Focused choices

For the last 15 minutes of each recitation, Sam gave her students a choice of activities to work on, offering a set of two to three different activities. Each student selected the activity or type of problem that they thought they needed to work on the most. Sam discussed explicitly how to choose an appropriate activity.

Scenario B - Student generated examples

In each recitation, Riley prepared a warm-up problem for the students, situated in a different “real-life” context (e.g. cooking, pets, travel, etc.). Riley drew the context for each recitation’s warm-up problem from the students’ own interests, as provided during the “get to know you” survey they administered at the beginning of the semester.

Design an activity to increase motivation

Pick one of the 3 C's of student motivation (Confidence, Context, Choice) and come up with one concrete idea of how you can foster student motivation in your next recitation. This can be a modification of an activity you are already doing in recitation, or something totally new!

Write it down and discuss with a partner.

Exit Ticket:

+ What is one thing you are taking away from today's discussion?

Δ Is there anything you still have questions about?

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