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AUTHOR Crowson, H. Michael  
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ABSTRACT

Undergraduate educational psychology students were assessed in terms of their active and dynamic dispositions to self-regulate in class participation or coursework. Their levels of self-reported affect related to the course were also assessed. Subjects were 110 students who completed the Beck Anxiety Inventory (A. Beck, 1990) as a measure of course-related affect and the Dynamic and Active Learning Inventory (A. Iran-Nejad and B. Chisson, 1992), a measure of the degree to which students thought they were actively or dynamically self-regulated in their approach to the course. Hypotheses predicted at the beginning of the study are not supported. Both active and dynamic forms of self-regulation were not found to be correlated to students' scores on the Beck Anxiety Inventory. Limitations of the study are suggested as possible reasons for this lack of correlation, either because the instrument was not an appropriate choice for measuring anxiety or because of within-subject factors. An appendix contains information about correlation and seven tables of descriptive statistics. (Contains 7 tables and 12 references.) (SLD)

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Running head: DISPOSITIONAL MODES

ED 427 029

The Relationship Between Dispositional Modes of Self-Regulation and Experienced Affect

H. Michael Crowson

University of Alabama

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### Abstract

In this study, undergraduate educational psychology students were assessed in terms of their active and dynamic dispositions to self-regulate in class participation or coursework. Their level of self-reported affect related to the course was also assessed. This paper reports the results.

## Introduction

Motivational research in education has often sought to elucidate the relationship between personal and situational factors and student learning (McCown, Driscoll, & Roop, 1996). Of particular interest has been the role that these factors play in students' a) willingness to approach or avoid academic tasks (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988), b) ability to self-regulate during learning (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990), c) strategy use (Braten & Olaussen, 1998), affective responses toward learning tasks (Iran-Nejad, 1987), and 4) ability to handle problems in a creative manner (Conti, Amabile, Pollak, 1995). Interestingly, a number of studies have focused on goal-orientation as a means to study motivational influences on learning (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988). These tend to differentiate learner goals into one of two (sometimes three) types - these being task- (or mastery) oriented, ego- (or social) oriented, and task-avoidant (Meece and Miller, 1997). According to Meece, Blumenfeld, and Hoyle (1988), learners who are task-orientated tend to be more intrinsically motivated and seek to improve themselves through task involvement. Individuals with this goal-orientation, whether dispositionally- or situationally- based, find learning tasks inherently rewarding and do not become cognitively engaged for purposes of some external payoff. Learners who are ego/socially-oriented engage in academic tasks "as a means to an end" (p. 515). Specifically, these individuals engage in tasks in order to prove themselves as academically viable and to avoid failure. Finally, learners may approach academic tasks from an orientation of task-avoidance. These individuals seek to minimize cognitive effort in their "desire to complete academic work without thinking or working too hard" (Miller & Meece, 1997, p. 287).

In their approaches to goal-orientations, various studies have emphasized the mediational role these play in motivating behavior. Of key note is the relationship among intrinsic and

extrinsic motivational factors, goal-orientation, and subsequent task performance and emotional reactivity by learners. In a study by Meece, Blumefeld, & Hoyle (1988), they proposed that students' goals mediate between personal and situational factors and "engagement patterns in the classroom" (p. 514). Based on a sample composed of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders, they found that students with a mastery-orientation tended to approach academic work with greater cognitive engagement than those with ego- or work-avoidance goals. Further, these goals were impacted by their level of "intrinsic motivation" (p. 514) and science attitudes. In another study by Pintrich and DeGroot (1990), they studied the relationship between motivational orientation and cognitive engagement, self-regulation, and test anxiety. Similar to the study by Meece, Blumefeld, and Hoyle, they found a relationship between intrinsic motivation and cognitive engagement - specifically, strategy use and self-regulation. The relationship between intrinsic motivation and anxiety, however, was non-existent. Although not directly specified in their article, one may infer that students' level of intrinsic motivation likely facilitated a goal-orientation which influenced subsequent cognitive task-engagement.

While much of the research on goal-orientation has been useful in delineating explicit cognitive factors mediating behavior, it fails to address the motivating nature of dynamic task involvement on the part of the learner. According to Iran-Nejad and Cecil (1992), a central tenet in psychological theorizing is that learning is an active process on the part of individuals. Therefore, with regards to the motivational theories above, this means that personal and situational factors contribute to the active construction of specific goal-orientations. It is this construction that supposedly guides learning and affective reactivity. In order to account for the role of both active and dynamic contributors to student motivation and task involvement, Iran-Nejad and Cecil (1992) presented their biofunctional model of interest and learning. According to

this model, two types of self-regulation are implicated in students' intellectual activity and motivational functioning. The first is that of active self-regulation which includes aspects of the approach described above whereby specific goal-orientations are developed that guide subsequent cognitive involvement. According to Iran-Nejad (1990), active self-regulation "is slow, occurs under the control of the central executive, and is inherently sequential". In contrast, dynamic self-regulation operates to involve the entire individual in learning, not only that which is actively regulated. Specifically, this form of self-regulation "is rapid, occurs under spontaneous control of the nonexecutive components of the central nervous system,...and is inherently simultaneous" (p. 573) - functions that have arisen over the course of evolutionary history.

Given that both active and dynamic self-regulation arise from two distinct internal mechanisms, the possibility that each may hold different affective consequences for learners seems plausible. For example, since dynamic self-regulation arises from the natural and spontaneous activity of the central nervous system, its affective consequence may be that of enhanced learner interest and feelings of well-being. To be sure, consider a jazz musician who freely engages in improvisation with his band-mates. In this situation, the person may feel a sense of pleasure and interest due to dynamic, creative task involvement. On the other hand, the affective consequence of active self-regulation may be that of increased anxiety and frustration in learners. According to the biofunctional model (Iran-Nejad & Cecil, 1992), the active processing of performance goals, self-evaluations, and strategies for task accomplishment may impede the learning process by decreasing students' reliance on their own dynamic self-regulation. Therefore, instead of becoming more interested in learning, they may feel tension and fear due to the primacy given to central executive functioning. Going back to our jazz musician, if during the course of a performance he/she was to develop an active mind set (one characterized by effortful processing

of goals and performance behaviors), then there may be a greater likelihood that the improvisation would become less fluid and more strained. In effect, the performance would be ruled by increased anxiety and decreased motivation and pleasure on the part of the musician.

Based on Iran-Nejad and Cecil's (1992) biofunctional conception, the research presented in this paper addresses the relationship among active and dynamic self-regulation and learner affect. University students were assessed in terms of their dispositional approaches to learning and self-reported affect related to their involvement in an undergraduate course in educational psychology. It was hypothesized that a positive relationship will be found students' dispositional tendency to actively self-regulate and scores obtained on an anxiety inventory. The dispositional tendency to dynamically self-regulate, in contrast, was hypothesized to have an inverse relationship with anxiety scores.

## Method

### Subjects

The sample for this study included 110 students enrolled in an undergraduate educational psychology course at a large Southeastern university. This study took place over the course of one week in October during the fall of 1998. There were 60 male and 48 female students who partook in this study. Two did not provide information on gender.

### Measures

The students responded to two measures in this study. Course-related affect was obtained by completing items from the Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck, 1990). With this measure, students responded to questions about the severity of anxiety symptoms experienced over the course of the previous week. Students marked on scan-tron sheets with their responses ranging from 0 (no reported symptoms at all) to 3 (severe symptom presentation). There were 21 items on the

inventory itself. These addressed both cognitive and physiological symptoms of anxiety. Instructions for completing the inventory were modified since the inventory was developed primarily for use in clinical settings. Specifically, in order to encourage accurate reporting of course-related anxiety, students were asked to respond to symptoms they had experienced related to the course itself rather than generalized anxiety. The second measure used in this study was the Dynamic and Active Learning Inventory (DALI) (Iran-Nejad & Chissom, 1992). This measure assessed the degree to which students felt they were actively and/or dynamically self-regulated in their approach to the course. Items for this measure totaled 32. Of the questions to be answered 11 measured active self-regulation, while 21 addressed dynamic self-regulation. Similar to completing the Beck Anxiety Inventory, students responded to questions by marking on scan-tron sheets. Items were scored from 1 (not at all) to 5 (all the time). Seven of the dynamic questions were reverse scored in order to account for negative wording.

### Procedure

Students in four course sections received both measures during the same class period. A fifth section was administered each measure on two separate days during the same week. In three sections, students were solicited to participate in the study by the principal researcher. A second researcher administered the measures to the fourth section (which was being taught by the principal researcher). Students were instructed on the purpose and nature of the study prior to engagement. Further, they were informed that they would receive extra credit points for participation in they so chose. After gaining cooperation, subjects were then instructed on how to go about completing the measures (see measures above) and handing them in. No other instructions were provided. For the fifth section, subjects were instructed similarly to those who completed both measures at the same time. Once again, subjects were instructed on the purpose



and nature of the study, the opportunity to earn extra credit points, and the procedure for completing the study. Subjects in the fifth section completed the BAI in the classroom on day one. The DALI was completed on day two.

### Results

The primary aim of this study was to assess the relationship among active and dynamic self-regulation and course affect. Essentially, it was hypothesized that a positive correlation would exist between active self-regulation and self-reported anxiety, dynamic self-regulation would contribute to a negative correlation. Pearson-Product Moment correlations were conducted using SPSS statistical software (for Windows). No relationship was found among students' reported levels of anxiety and active, and dynamic self-regulation scores. Specifically, the correlation between active self-regulation and anxiety was  $-.023$ , while that between dynamic self-regulation and anxiety was  $.002$ . Thus, both were non-significant. Interestingly, a significant positive correlation ( $.494$ ) was found between active and dynamic self-regulation at the  $.01$  level.

As an aside, students' grade point averages (GPA) and ages were correlated with their scores on the Beck Anxiety Inventory and responses to the DALI subscales (dynamic and active self-regulation). The relationship between GPA and active self-regulation was  $.160$ . Dynamic self-regulation, on the other hand, had a significant low correlation ( $.192$ ) to GPA at the  $p=.05$  level. In a second analysis, Beck scores were correlated with students' age. These variables were found to be correlated significantly ( $.221$ ) at the  $.05$  level. In a final analysis, the relationship between students' age and dispositional self-regulation was obtained. Results demonstrated that age correlated ( $.264$ ) to dynamic self-regulation at the  $p=.01$  level, while its relationship ( $-.018$ ) to active self-regulation scores was non-significant.

## Discussion

The hypotheses predicted at the beginning of this study were not supported. Specifically, both active and dynamic forms of self-regulation (as measured by DALI subscales) were not found to be correlated to students' scores on the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI). These findings may be due to limitations of the study rather than the hypotheses themselves. First, the BAI appears to have been an inappropriate choice for measuring course-related anxiety. To be sure, it measures pathological anxiety that is characteristic of clinical samples. Therefore, it may be limited in its capacity to measure milder symptoms that may present themselves in a typical classroom setting. Essentially, students completing the measure were asked to identify anxiety symptoms that are most apparent in clinical samples such as “numbness or tingling”, “heart pounding or racing”, “difficulty breathing” (Beck, 1990), and so forth. These types of symptoms tend to emerge in individuals with more extreme disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). In contrast, students experiencing anxiety in the classroom may feel less pronounced cognitive and physiological symptoms and, instead, experience more generalized apprehension. Therefore, a more appropriate measure may need to be located or constructed for use with students in the classroom. A couple of questions also arise as we consider whether or not to seek more appropriate measures for this study: Do people have dispositional tendencies to react actively or dynamically in different learning situations? Or, are our dispositions toward self-regulation more generalized? Future research on the relationship between dispositional modes of self-regulation and situational influences could shed light on these questions.

A second reason for the non-significant results obtained in this study may be due to within-subject factors. Specifically, the students enrolled in the undergraduate class most likely

had a hefty store of learning strategies from which to draw, particularly in difficult learning situations. Therefore, prior knowledge may have buffered the level of anxiety they felt related to the course. For example, knowledge of elaboration as a study technique may reduce anxiety due to the perception that one has a strategy that could be useful in obtaining a good grade. Given the possibility that this may have occurred in the present study, another area of future research may be to look at how prior knowledge of active learning strategies may influence dispositional modes of self-regulation and course-related affect.

Finally, in their study Iran-Nejad and Chissom (1992) found a significant relationship between dynamic self-regulation and GPA, particularly when active self-regulation was partialled out. Similar, but less impressive, results were found in here. It appears that the construct of dynamic self-regulation is a valid one. However, given the non-significant relationships found between both types self-regulation and the BAI, we must consider another possibility for many of the non-significant results obtained in this study - that the DALI itself did not discriminate between the two sources of self-regulation in students. This may account for the .494 correlation obtained between active and dynamic self-regulation. A possibility for this may be that the students were intuitively drawn towards dynamic questions while also validating active ones. Indeed, this could have happened given that the instructors teaching the educational psychology course place particular emphasis on students becoming more reflective and insightful in the way they learn. In fact, this is a programmatic focus. During their participation in the course, students are required to complete “insights” (mini-papers emphasizing more insightful processing of information) and teacher/video observation (reflective) papers as part of their grades. In addition, there is a heavy emphasis on students reflecting on the nature of authentic teaching and learning. In fact, many class discussions address this topic. Therefore, it may be that the course itself

served as a prime for affirmative answers on dynamic questions, whereas on active questions they answered with their more habitual approaches to learning. One must keep in mind that in the Iran-Nejad and Chissom study undergraduates in an experimental psychology class were used as subjects. That class, however, may not have emphasized reflection and insight to the same extent done as in the course from which subjects were drawn in this study. Given this possibility, future research needs to address the interaction among domain-specific knowledge, dispositional modes of self-regulation, and student affect.

### Conclusion

This study sought to elucidate the relationship between active and dynamic self-regulation and course-related affect. It was hypothesized that active self-regulation would be positively correlated to anxiety symptoms. Dynamic self-regulation was hypothesized to be negatively correlated. Results for each of these hypotheses were non-significant. While these findings do not provide any additional insights into how course affect is related to the two modes of self-regulation as postulated by Iran-Nejad (1990), they do point to future areas of research. Specifically, a variety of measurement issues need to be addressed. First, a more appropriate measure for classroom affect needs to be obtained or developed. In addition, future research should include the study of interest since this is postulated by Iran-Nejad and Cecil (1992) to be related to more dynamic modes of functioning. Secondly, issues related to within-subject factors need to be addressed in future research. To be sure, there are questions as to whether or not domain-specific knowledge has any impact on how students report of course affect.

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  + beck17 + beck18 + beck19 + beck20 + beck21 - 21 .
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DESCRIPTIVES
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## Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

|                    | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean     | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|----------|----------------|
| BECKSCOREREV       | 100 | .000    | 45.000  | 14.71000 | 10.50281       |
| Valid N (listwise) | 100 |         |         |          |                |

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DESCRIPTIVES
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VARIABLES=beckscor active dynamic
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## Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

|                    | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean     | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|----------|----------------|
| BECKSCOREREV       | 100 | .000    | 45.000  | 14.71000 | 10.50281       |
| ACTIVESCORE        | 110 | 15.000  | 48.000  | 33.77273 | 6.13257        |
| DYNAMIC            | 109 | 22.000  | 82.000  | 59.93578 | 9.35837        |
| Valid N (listwise) | 100 |         |         |          |                |

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CORRELATIONS
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## Correlations

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**Correlations**

|                                  |                     | BECKSCOREREV | DYNAMIC | ACTIVESCORE |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| BECKSCOREREV                     | Pearson Correlation | 1.000        | .002    | -.023       |
|                                  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .            | .984    | .819        |
|                                  | N                   | 100          | 100     | 100         |
| DYNAMIC                          | Pearson Correlation | .002         | 1.000   | .494**      |
|                                  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .984         | .       | .000        |
|                                  | N                   | 100          | 109     | 109         |
| ACTIVESCORE                      | Pearson Correlation | -.023        | .494**  | 1.000       |
|                                  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .819         | .000    | .           |
|                                  | N                   | 100          | 109     | 110         |
| Grade Point Average<br>(overall) | Pearson Correlation | .138         | .192*   | .160        |
|                                  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .172         | .046    | .097        |
|                                  | N                   | 99           | 108     | 108         |
| Student Age                      | Pearson Correlation | .221*        | .264**  | -.018       |
|                                  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .028         | .006    | .850        |
|                                  | N                   | 99           | 108     | 108         |



**Correlations**

|                               |                     | Grade Point Average (overall) | Student Age |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| BECKSCOREREV                  | Pearson Correlation | .138                          | .221*       |
|                               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .172                          | .028        |
|                               | N                   | 99                            | 99          |
| DYNAMIC                       | Pearson Correlation | .192*                         | .264**      |
|                               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .046                          | .006        |
|                               | N                   | 108                           | 108         |
| ACTIVESCORE                   | Pearson Correlation | .160                          | -.018       |
|                               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .097                          | .850        |
|                               | N                   | 108                           | 108         |
| Grade Point Average (overall) | Pearson Correlation | 1.000                         | -.060       |
|                               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                             | .536        |
|                               | N                   | 108                           | 108         |
| Student Age                   | Pearson Correlation | -.060                         | 1.000       |
|                               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .536                          | .           |
|                               | N                   | 108                           | 108         |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

PARTIAL CORR

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**Partial Corr**

- - - P A R T I A L C O R R E L A T I O N C O E F F I C I E N T S - - -

Controlling for.. ACTIVE

|          | GPA                        | AGE                        | BECKSCOR                  | DYNAMIC                   |
|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| GPA      | 1.0000<br>( 0)<br>P= .     | -.0696<br>( 96)<br>P= .496 | .1419<br>( 96)<br>P= .163 | .1178<br>( 96)<br>P= .248 |
| AGE      | -.0696<br>( 96)<br>P= .496 | 1.0000<br>( 0)<br>P= .     | .2208<br>( 96)<br>P= .029 | .3375<br>( 96)<br>P= .001 |
| BECKSCOR | .1419<br>( 96)<br>P= .163  | .2208<br>( 96)<br>P= .029  | 1.0000<br>( 0)<br>P= .    | .0296<br>( 96)<br>P= .772 |
| DYNAMIC  | .1178<br>( 96)<br>P= .248  | .3375<br>( 96)<br>P= .001  | .0296<br>( 96)<br>P= .772 | 1.0000<br>( 0)<br>P= .    |

(Coefficient / (D.F.) / 2-tailed Significance)

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PARTIAL CORR

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- - - P A R T I A L C O R R E L A T I O N C O E F F I C I E N T S - - -

Controlling for.. DYNAMIC

|          | GPA                        | AGE                        | ACTIVE                     | BECKSCOR                   |
|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| GPA      | 1.0000<br>( 0)<br>P= .     | -.1272<br>( 96)<br>P= .212 | .0620<br>( 96)<br>P= .544  | .1373<br>( 96)<br>P= .177  |
| AGE      | -.1272<br>( 96)<br>P= .212 | 1.0000<br>( 0)<br>P= .     | -.2084<br>( 96)<br>P= .039 | .2251<br>( 96)<br>P= .026  |
| ACTIVE   | .0620<br>( 96)<br>P= .544  | -.2084<br>( 96)<br>P= .039 | 1.0000<br>( 0)<br>P= .     | -.0292<br>( 96)<br>P= .776 |
| BECKSCOR | .1373<br>( 96)<br>P= .177  | .2251<br>( 96)<br>P= .026  | -.0292<br>( 96)<br>P= .776 | 1.0000<br>( 0)<br>P= .     |

(Coefficient / (D.F.) / 2-tailed Significance)

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CORRELATIONS

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## Correlations

### Correlations

|                            |                     | Beck Anxiety Inventory #4 | Beck Anxiety Inventory #5 | Beck Anxiety Inventory #10 | Beck Anxiety Inventory #17 |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Beck Anxiety Inventory #4  | Pearson Correlation | 1.000                     | .465**                    | .566**                     | .523**                     |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                         | .000                      | .000                       | .000                       |
|                            | N                   | 110                       | 110                       | 110                        | 110                        |
| Beck Anxiety Inventory #5  | Pearson Correlation | .465**                    | 1.000                     | .643**                     | .516**                     |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                      | .                         | .000                       | .000                       |
|                            | N                   | 110                       | 110                       | 110                        | 110                        |
| Beck Anxiety Inventory #10 | Pearson Correlation | .566**                    | .643**                    | 1.000                      | .628**                     |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                      | .000                      | .                          | .000                       |
|                            | N                   | 110                       | 110                       | 110                        | 110                        |
| Beck Anxiety Inventory #17 | Pearson Correlation | .523**                    | .516**                    | .628**                     | 1.000                      |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                      | .000                      | .000                       | .                          |
|                            | N                   | 110                       | 110                       | 110                        | 110                        |
| ACTIVESCORE                | Pearson Correlation | .070                      | .040                      | .001                       | .133                       |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .465                      | .680                      | .989                       | .167                       |
|                            | N                   | 110                       | 110                       | 110                        | 110                        |
| DYNAMIC                    | Pearson Correlation | -.010                     | -.055                     | -.065                      | .046                       |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .921                      | .568                      | .501                       | .632                       |
|                            | N                   | 109                       | 109                       | 109                        | 109                        |

### Correlations

|                            |                     | ACTIVESCORE | DYNAMIC |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------|
| Beck Anxiety Inventory #4  | Pearson Correlation | .070        | -.010   |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .465        | .921    |
|                            | N                   | 110         | 109     |
| Beck Anxiety Inventory #5  | Pearson Correlation | .040        | -.055   |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .680        | .568    |
|                            | N                   | 110         | 109     |
| Beck Anxiety Inventory #10 | Pearson Correlation | .001        | -.065   |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .989        | .501    |
|                            | N                   | 110         | 109     |
| Beck Anxiety Inventory #17 | Pearson Correlation | .133        | .046    |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .167        | .632    |
|                            | N                   | 110         | 109     |
| ACTIVESCORE                | Pearson Correlation | 1.000       | .494**  |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .           | .000    |
|                            | N                   | 110         | 109     |
| DYNAMIC                    | Pearson Correlation | .494**      | 1.000   |
|                            | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000        | .       |
|                            | N                   | 109         | 109     |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

PARTIAL CORR

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| Author(s): <i>H. Michael Crowson</i>   |                                     |
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| Signature: <i>[Signature]</i>  | Printed Name/Position/Title:<br><i>H. Michael Crowson</i> |                         |
| Organization/Address:<br><i>3802 4th Avenue<br/>TUSC-10050, AL 35405</i> | Telephone:<br><i>205-759-5446</i>                         | FAX:                    |
|  | E-Mail Address:<br><i>mcrowson@dbtech.net</i>             | Date:<br><i>11/4/98</i> |

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