

# The Influence of Future Orientation and Psychopathology on Coping Behaviors and Affective States in Self-Control Conflicts

Katherine L. Clark  
Dr. Katie Garrison, Justin Wahlers  
The University of Alabama

## BACKGROUND

How does personality influence the way we cope with self-control conflicts? Past research suggests:

- Individuals higher in depression and anxiety have less automatic control over their impulses [1]
- Individuals with higher self-control demonstrate more effort to resist indulging a temptation in a perceived conflict [2]

We hypothesized:

- Psychopathology (i.e., anxiety and depression) will predict distress, less positive valence, greater perceived conflict, and less problem-focused coping
- Future orientation (i.e., consideration of future consequences and self-control) will predict less distress, greater positive valence, less perceived conflict, and greater problem-focused coping

## METHODS

- A sample of 62 college students from the University of Alabama
- Participants read a series of hypothetical self-control conflicts (i.e., facing a potential breakup, a difficult college exam, an uncomfortable living situation)
- Participants completed several items in response to the scenario:
  - Valence, distress, conflict perception, and problem-focused coping
- Lastly, participants completed four questionnaires:
  - Depression, anxiety, self-control, and consideration of future consequences

## RESULTS

- Higher levels of depression and anxiety predicted greater perceived conflict
- Higher levels of consideration of future consequences predicted greater problem-focused coping
- Higher self-control predicted lower perceived conflict

Figure 1

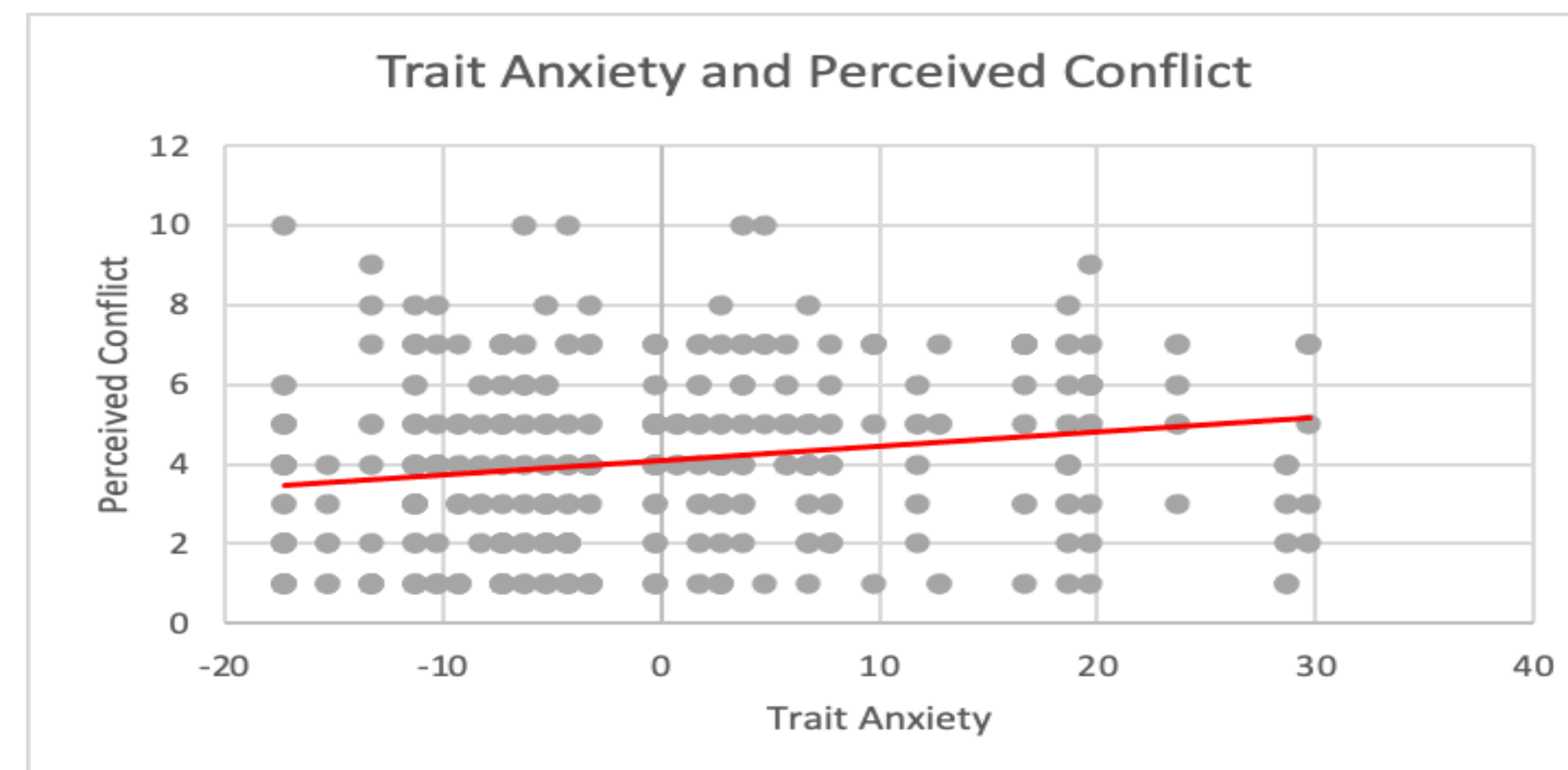
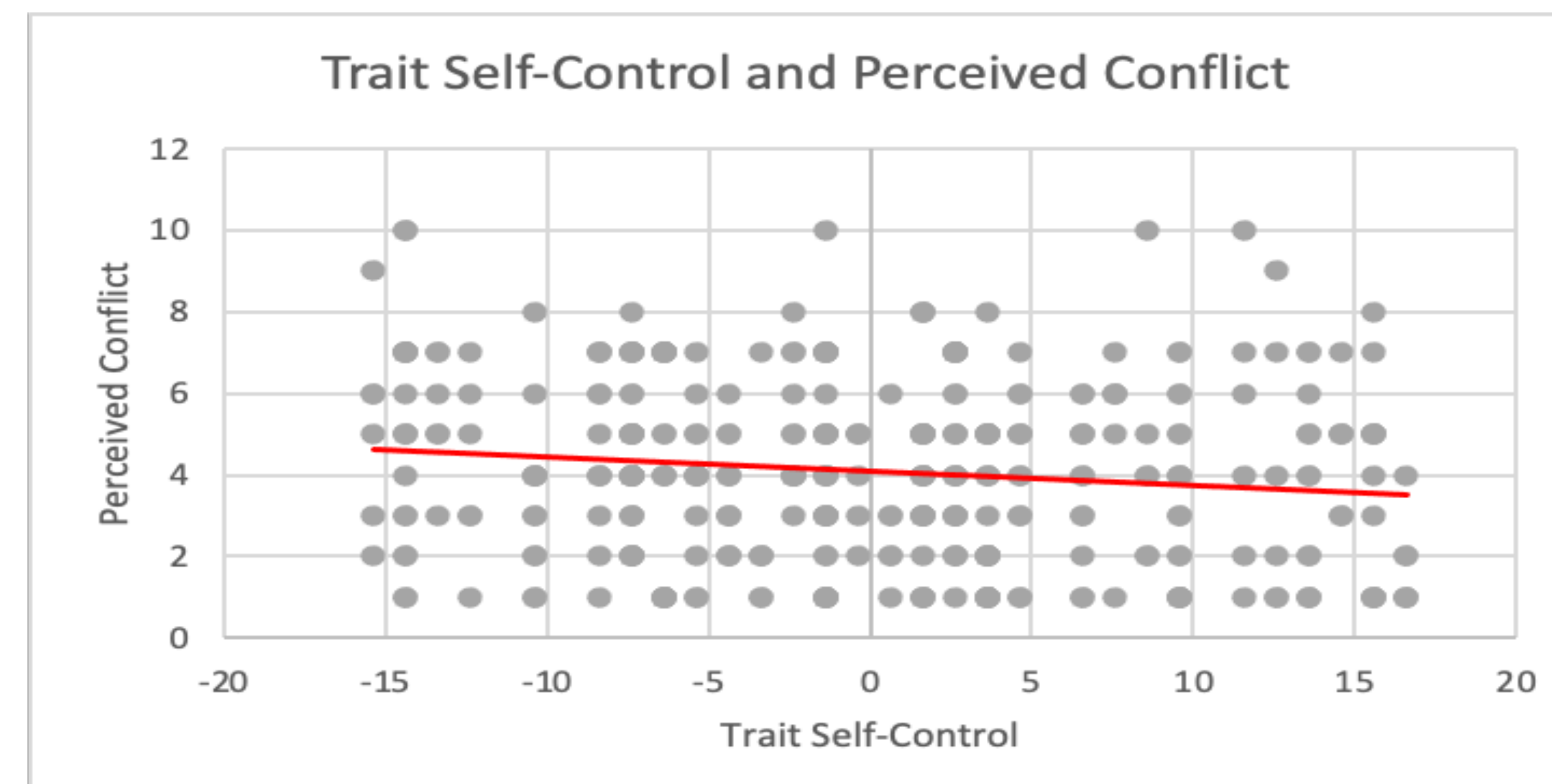


Figure 2



## CONCLUSIONS

Individuals higher in depression and anxiety perceive self-control conflicts as more motivationally conflicting, while trait self-control predicted less perceived conflict. Future orientation is associated with greater adaptive coping strategies and more automatic self-control.

Future research should examine interventions for psychopathology that promote automatic control over impulses in self-control conflicts.

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