Personality and Individual Differences 116 (2017) 252–257

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

Implicit and explicit Motivated Self-Perception as hypothesis-driven self-construal☆

Leah M. Kaufmann [a,*], Victor E. Sojo [b], Anna E. Genat [c,d], Melissa A. Wheeler [c], Robert E. Wood [c,e]

[a] School of Psychology, Australian Catholic University, Australia
[b] Centre for Workplace Leadership, The University of Melbourne, Australia
[c] Centre for Ethical Leadership, Ormond College, The University of Melbourne, Australia
[d] Melbourne Business School, The University of Melbourne, Australia
[e] Australian Graduate School of Management, University of New South Wales, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 25 November 2016
Received in revised form 15 April 2017
Accepted 25 April 2017
Available online xxxx

Keywords:
Motivated Self-Perception
Implicit self-concept
Hypothesis-driven self-construal
Personality
Autobiographical memory

ABSTRACT

Motivated Self-Perception (MSP) facilitates the positive perception of the self via the endorsement of desirable characteristics, selective recall of autobiographical memories, and performance of desirable behaviour. Peters and Gawronski (2011) proposed a model of MSP as "hypothesis-driven" self-construal integrating implicit and explicit self-concepts, motivation, and autobiographical memory. The current study provides the first complete test of this model. One hundred and twenty-seven participants read a summary of a fictional study before completing measures of motivation, personality self-ratings, autobiographical memory, and implicit self-personality associations. Explicit self-concept, autobiographical memory, and the implicit self-personality association were affected by the manipulation, consistent with predictions. Results also revealed that implicit self-personality associations were predicted by motivation and autobiographical memory, providing evidence for the proposed model of MSP, and further evidence for the interconnectedness of implicit and explicit self-constructs. Finally, these results are interpreted as evidence for the effect of MSP-based self-enhancement across all levels of the self.

1. Introduction

Motivated Self-Perception (MSP; Sanitioso, Kunda, & Fong, 1990) is the perception of socially desirable attributes as true of one's self (e.g., Kunda, 1987). MSP has been found to affect self-ratings (Kunda & Sanitioso, 1989), autobiographical memory (e.g., Brunot & Sanitioso, 2004), desirable behaviour (e.g., Augustinova, Collange, Sanitioso, & Musca, 2011), and even implicit self associations (Peters & Gawronski, 2011). MSP research has demonstrated that inducing the desirability of a characteristic can result in the perception of this characteristic as being part of the self at explicit, remembered, and implicit levels.

Peters and Gawronski's (2011) hypothesis-driven self-construal integrates theory and research providing an explanation of the interconnection of implicit and explicit self-concepts and autobiographical memory, and provides a complete model of MSP effects across all levels of the self. However, the complete model remains untested. The current study will test this model by enhancing the desirability of Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I) in a yoked-control design (Church, 1964) to examine explicit, autobiographical memory, and implicit MSP effects. In doing so, we consider the impact of the inherently differentially desirable factor of E (e.g., Duffy & Chartrand, 2015), and motivation from induced desirability of E versus I, on self-perceptions across all levels of the self.

1.1. MSP review

The typical MSP paradigm was developed by Kunda and Sanitioso (1989) who had student participants read that Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I) was associated with academic success and attempt to explain the finding. The students then completed a purportedly unrelated measure of personality and demonstrated higher self-ratings for the desirable trait (e.g., E or I, respectively). This finding was consistent with previous research that found that participants who were informed that more or less frequent action was associated with health resulted in a corresponding increase or decreased the reported frequency of the action (e.g., more frequent tooth-brushing - Ross, McFarland, & Fletcher, 1981; consumption of caffeine - Sherman & Kunda, cited in Kruglanski, 1996).

Explicit (i.e., self-reported) MSP occurs only if the manipulation enhances the desirability of the attribute and is personally relevant. For

Abbreviations: MSP, Motivated Self-Perception; I, introversion; E, extraversion; MSPI, Motivated Self-Perception – introversion (condition); MSPE, Motivated Self-Perception – extraversion (condition); GNAT, Go/No Go association task; ANOVA, analysis of variance.

☆ The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

* Corresponding author at: School of Psychology, Australian Catholic University, Locked Bag 4115 Fitzroy MDC, Fitzroy, VIC 3065, Australia.
E-mail address: leah.kaufmann@acu.edu.au (L.M. Kaufmann).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.04.055
0191-8869/

example, Sanitioso et al.' (1990) found that participants who were induced to believe a trait was conducive to the success for police officers (i.e., a profession of little interest to student participants) were unaffected by the MSP manipulation, though they rated the trait as desirable. This supports the MSP interpretation over that of socially desirable responding (e.g., Paulhus & John, 1998) as desirability was independent of self-ratings and ineffective alone. In addition, MSP for E and I have been found to be constrained by participants' own E and I, assessed previously. This finding suggests that MSP self-ratings reflect participants' personality rather than the desirability of the trait.

Sanitioso et al. (1990) proposed that explicit MSP effects reflect a biased search of autobiographical memory facilitating the perception of a desirable trait as being true of self. Four distinct findings support this argument. First, participants typically reported significantly more desirable trait-relevant autobiographical memories (Sanitioso et al., 1990). Second, desirable trait-relevant autobiographical memories were recalled with greater perceived ease than undesirable trait-relevant autobiographical memories (Sanitioso & Niedenthal, 2006). Third, desirable trait-relevant autobiographical memories were recalled more in general or typical terms, rather than in specific or instance-based terms (Brunot & Sanitioso, 2004). Finally, desirable trait-relevant autobiographical memories were recalled more from a first, compared to a third, person perspective (Sanitioso, 2008). These findings show that MSP affects both content and experience of autobiographical memory making the desirable attribute appear typical and internally, rather situationally attributable (e.g., Kelley, 1973).

Beyond self-perception, Sanitioso and Wlodarski (2004) found participants preferred partners who confirm MSP-consistent self-perception. Furthermore, Augustinova et al. (2011) found that participants who were induced to believe rationality (versus intuition) was associated with success perceived themselves as more rational and demonstrated greater use of base-rate sensitivity than availability heuristics to solve reasoning problems (Kahneman & Tversky, 1973). These participants also engaged in more time-consuming or effortful consideration of a problem, and provided more accurate solutions. In sum, participants who believed that rationality was associated with success saw themselves as more rational, behaved more rationally, and were more successful than those who did not. These findings are strong evidence for (at least) temporarily motivated change in the self, which can be perceived by self and others via behaviour.

1.2. Implicit MSP

Peters and Gawronski (2011) proposed an interconnected and mutually influencing relationship between implicit and explicit self-concepts via two processes of self-construal. First, a bottom-up process allows the explicit self to be construed from information in autobiographical memory and validated by implicit self-associations. That is, a person answering the question "who am I?" introspects on their behaviour and experiences, activating context-relevant autobiographical memories and implicit self associations, resulting in a "data-driven" or bottom-up self-construal. This process facilitates consistency across self-aspects and results in substantial consistency across (particularly similar) situations. In contrast, the context-consistent dynamic self results from the "hypothesis-driven" or top-down process of self-construal. Specifically, motivation leads to a confirmatory search of autobiographical memory and biased activation of motivation-consistent implicit self associations to validate this explicit proposition (e.g., "I *am* extraverted"). Importantly, this process of self-construal describes both the mechanism of MSP, and proposes a model for MSP-based change across all levels of the self.

Support for Peters and Gawronski's (2011) processes or self-construal were demonstrated by two findings. First, the significant relationship between autobiographical recall and explicit self-rated personality was fully mediated by implicit self-personality associations, supporting for their proposed bottom-up process (Study 1). In Study 2, the typical MSP induction resulted in stronger implicit associations between self-desirable trait and other-undesirable trait, compared to self-undesirable trait and other-desirable trait using Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Moreover, implicit self associations were predicted by the induction condition, and this relationship was fully mediated by explicit personality self-ratings consistent with the hypothesis-drive process, and was the first demonstration of implicit MSP.

1.3. The current study

The current study was designed to conceptually replicate implicit MSP, and to extends this by testing Peters and Gawronski's (2011) proposed model of MSP (i.e., hypothesis-driven self-construal). Specifically, the effects of an MSP induction will be measured (i.e., motivation), and its effect on implicit and explicit self-concepts, and autobiographical memory will be assessed. Finally, the contribution of each of these variables to the prediction of the implicit self-concept will be examined. In doing so, we will provide the first test of the Peters and Gawronski's model of MSP. Furthermore, by using the Go/No Go Association Task (GNAT; Nosek & Banaji, 2001) in place of the IAT (Greenwald et al., 1998), we will eliminate the confound of inseparable self and other implicit associations (i.e., IAT scores reflect both targets and attribute, whereas each GNAT d' reflects only one target and attribute; see Williams & Kaufmann, 2012). This allows exploration of the distinct effects of MSP on self-I and self-E implicit associations which will provide further insight into the nature of how this personality factor functions explicitly and implicitly.

Consistent with previous MSP findings, we propose that:

1. Participants who were informed that I was associated with success (MSPI condition) will endorse I as more related to success than those who were informed that E has been found to be associated with success (MSPE condition). This will provide a measure of motivation or trait desirability.
2. Participants in the MSPI condition will endorse I as more true of self than MSPE participants.
3. Participants will recall a higher percentage of memories related to the success-related trait.
4. Participants will demonstrate stronger implicit associations between the self and the success-related trait.
5. Enhanced perception of the I- or E-success relationship via MSP will predict self-I and self-E implicit associations via motivation and autobiographical memory (see Fig. 2) consistent with Peters and Gawronski's (2011) proposed model.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 127 undergraduate psychology students including 18 males (14.3%) and one participant who did not indicate their gender. Participants ranged from 18 to 58 years ($M = 22.06$, $SD = 5.43$). The majority (86.6%) of participants were born in Australia, and all met the English language university entry requirements. Three (1.9%) participants were excluded from analyses for incomplete data and 27 (18.0%) for poor performance on the GNAT.

2.2. Materials and measures

2.2.1. MSP induction

Participants read a summary of a fictional study which was designed to manipulate the desirability of I (MSPI) or E (MSPE). The summaries were 98 words linking I or E to academic and professional success. The only difference between the summaries was a sentence attributing the cause of success to independence (i.e., MSPI) or "networking" (i.e., MSPE; see Supplement).