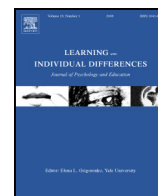




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Learning and Individual Differences

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

Type and strength of self-construal interact with the influence of anchoring heuristics in appraisals of self-efficacy

Sara M. Dowd^{*}, Daniele Artisticco

Department of Psychology, Baruch College, 1 Bernard Baruch Way, New York, NY 10010, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 June 2014

Received in revised form 8 February 2016

Accepted 22 May 2016

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Self-efficacy

Self-construal type

Self-construal strength

Anchoring heuristic

ABSTRACT

The thrust of this study was to evaluate the effect of self-construal *type* and *strength* on self-efficacy when an anchoring heuristic is provided. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: high anchor, low anchor, medium anchor, or no anchor. We first measured self-construal type (independent versus interdependent, or “I” versus “We”) and also computed participants’ strength of self-construal type. Finally, we measured participants’ perceived self-efficacy to complete a puzzle task. Our findings indicated a three-way interaction among “anchors,” self-construal type and self-construal strength regarding self-efficacy. A main effect for self-construal type was also found. Specifically, independent self-construal participants had significantly higher levels of self-efficacy. The theoretical basis as well as the implications of this finding are discussed.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Particularly enriching to our experiences is the exchange we perpetuate with others. We validate our behaviors, thoughts, and emotions using methods of self-perception that involve other people or groups of people. For instance, knowing that a classmate did well on a test could inform a student’s perception of personal abilities (she could think, “I can do well on that test too”). It is crucial, however, to establish the way in which this student sees herself in relation to her peers beyond a mere social comparison. To make a specific prediction about the outcomes of social cognition, an understanding of how her self-perception is driven by her sense of “self” is necessary.

Two of the most influential social cognitive theories in modern psychology, self-construal and self-efficacy (Anderson, 2011), can help us further elaborate on a person’s self-perception in social contexts. Within the extant self-construal literature, one’s own experience of how others perform (i.e., vicarious experience), could be tempered by social roles, cultural norms, and interpersonal exchanges (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The emphasis one places on these elements tends to beget schemas that are either interdependent or independent with respect

to perceived social groups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 2010). Generally, successful vicarious experience does not just enhance one’s knowledge via observation of a model, it also increases perceptions of self-efficacy, or one’s perceived ability to accomplish a goal (Bandura, 1986; Bandura & Cervone, 1983, 1986). Thus, when the only information available regarding a given task is anchored to the performance of others, perceived self-efficacy could rely on how independent or interdependent one feels in relation others (i.e., self-efficacy could rely on one’s self-construal).

1.1. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a fundamental tenet of the broader *Social Cognitive Theory* (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura’s (1986) triadic reciprocal determinism, the main paradigm for the Social Cognitive Theory, an individual learns by observing others’ behaviors and choosing whether or not to imitate their behaviors. This decision is influenced by self-efficacy in that, a person with high self-efficacy is more likely to imitate a model compared to someone with low self-efficacy. A child of a professional athlete who is also confident in his own athletic prowess is more likely to try a competitive sport than the child of an athlete who does not feel confident in his athletic abilities. Despite the presence of a successful model, the latter is more likely to remain a spectator. People who are highly efficacious in a particular domain tend to set goals that increase their motivation to perform; they also are more persistent and ultimately, successful (Bandura & Cervone, 1983, 1986).

Self-efficacy will be higher for tasks perceived as easy as opposed to tasks perceived as difficult; although, it is important to note that an individual’s perceived self-efficacy is not consistent across all contexts (Bandura, 1997, 1977). A student who has high self-efficacy for academic tasks does not necessarily have high self-efficacy for interpreting social

^{*} Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, Texas A&M University, 401 Joe Routh Blvd, College Station, TX 77843, United States.

E-mail address: sara.dowd4@gmail.com (S.M. Dowd).

¹ It is worth acknowledging that recent academic discourse on “the self” has questioned whether the potential of the term itself is being sufficiently understood (see Klein, 2012 for an overview). Although the scope of this work is not to endeavor to define “the self” per se, we agree with Klein’s (2012) assertion that models of the self are typically contextualized. By examining two of these models simultaneously (self-efficacy and self-construal), we believe that it is possible to blur these models’ contextual lines; in so doing we begin to develop a more encompassing view of “the self.”

cues. Self-efficacy's contextualized nature was illustrated empirically by examining the influence of aging on participants' everyday problem solving ability. Artistic, Cervone, and Pezzuti (2003) found that each of the two age groups, young adults and older adults, exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy for tasks that were ecologically relevant to their age group. Students (young adults) had higher levels of self-efficacy for problems such as taking a difficult exam. Similarly, older adults were found to have higher levels of self-efficacy for older-adult problems such as initiating a conversation about an adult offspring's concerning lifestyle choices.

Vicarious experiences, or witnessing a model perform a task, can increase the observer's self-efficacy, if the model is competent. Parent and Fortin (2000) studied vicarious experience, self-efficacy, and performance success in rehabilitation using a sample of male patients undergoing a coronary artery bypass graft surgery. The control group participants followed a standard procedure of surgery and recovery. Prior to the surgery and throughout the recovery period, experimental group participants met with volunteers who had successfully recovered from the same procedure. The volunteers discussed the success of their surgery and convalescence and conferred their new ability to be physically active. Analogously, the volunteers served as models in the patients' "second-hand" vicarious experience. Five days after surgery, participants who met with the volunteers reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy for daily life activities, such as walking, and climbing stairs. They also performed these salubrious activities more successfully than the control group at four weeks after surgery (Parent & Fortin, 2000).

"Anchoring heuristics" can also impact self-efficacy. An anchoring heuristic is a reference point that primes individuals to adjust their expectations or perceptions accordingly (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). For example, suppose that a jar of marbles is shown to two groups of people. The first group is asked if they think there are more or <1000 marbles in the jar and the second group is instead asked if they think there are more or <100 marbles in the jar. Finally, both groups are asked to estimate the number of marbles actually in the jar. According to Tversky and Kahneman (1974), the former is more likely to estimate a larger number of marbles because they were given a larger anchoring heuristic, or reference point.

Cervone and Peake (1986) demonstrated that "anchoring" a mental representation of a task to an easy (i.e., high anchor statement) or difficult (i.e., low anchor statement) level instills self-efficacy. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups and, after being told they would be asked to complete 20 puzzles, were subjected to either a high anchor statement, a low anchor statement, or no anchor statement accordingly. The high (low) anchor statement indicated that, 90% (10%) of other participants were able to successfully complete all 20 puzzles. Participants then worked on either 20 anagrams or 20 cyclic graphs tasks. Cervone and Peake's (1986) results indicated that individuals who were given a high anchoring heuristic endorsed higher levels of self-efficacy than those given a low anchor or no anchor heuristics. The study also found that participants in the high anchor condition persisted on the tasks for longer than those in the low anchor condition (Cervone & Peake, 1986).

Cervone and Peake's (1986) results demonstrate that anchoring heuristics work effectively and in accordance with Tversky and Kahneman's (1974) theory, even when other individuals' efforts are used as the reference point. Furthermore, Parent and Fortin (2000) established that "second-hand," or not directly observed, vicarious experience mirrors Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory and the effect of direct vicarious experience on self-efficacy. In the present study, anchoring heuristics that refer to fictitious others' performances are intended to simulate a second-hand vicarious experience of a cohort of peers instead of the direct vicarious experience of a single model.

1.2. Closeness and priming on self-efficacy

The relationship between two people is an important component of their social context (Mischel, 1973). Feelings of empathy have been

found to correlate with the degree to which the observer feels similar to the observed; consequently, empathy also correlates with altruistic behavior (see Davis, 1994 for an overview). The probability of an individual imitating a model not only depends on the observer's self-efficacy, but also on the connection said individual feels towards the model. This emotional and cognitive closeness augurs the imitative behavior. However, we suggest that empathy serves as the catalyst.

It is possible that when an observer feels connected to a model who is successfully completing a task, empathy would encourage cognitive and emotional mimicry (i.e., the observer would experience an increase in self-efficacy, as successfully performing the task would increase the model's own self-efficacy), thus encouraging the observer's imitation of the task performance. For example, a young girl would be more likely to attempt to play the violin after watching her sister's recital rather than in response to observing a YouTube video featuring an evanescent model. Children attending summer camps might be quickly influenced by each other to make risky decisions in lieu of replicating mature behavior from supervisors (Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

Other factors that do not require direct comparisons to or relationships with specific individuals are also salient to the complex social-cognitive matrix. For instance, the seminal concept of stereotype threats (Steele & Aronson, 1995) bespeaks the relevance of social or cultural group norms when using priming techniques in experimental manipulations. The influence of a prime (a nominally positive or negative "anchor") is somewhat determined by how close one feels to the group portrayed in the priming stimulus (Levy, 1996). For example, Levy (1996) demonstrated that a negative stereotype about aging can be subliminally primed to groups of both young and older adults, but the prime would only beget low task self-efficacy in the older adults. Outside the confines of a laboratory, this process typifies the pervasive nature of social-perceptions on self-perceptions and vice versa. A student may only need to identify as African American to be at risk for experiencing stereotype threat. That group membership identification, in tandem with societally-perpetuated and racially-driven assumptions, may affect the student's confidence substantially without a directly-observed vicarious experience (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Thus, conjectured kindred between a person and a model, or a person and an anchoring stimulus group, affects self-efficacy and task performance; but what can be said about the influence of the person who is observing a model? Perhaps it is the person's perception of herself in relation to her milieu that ought to be examined first.

1.3. Self-construal and self-efficacy

"Independent" and "interdependent" refer to the two dichotomous types of self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Those who are independent tend to focus on the "I," be very autonomous, and center on internal thoughts and feelings as well as personal skills and behavioral patterns. However, independent self-construal people do consider others by means of comparison (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For example, an independent person might define himself as "intelligent" or after being named valedictorian. The peer-comparison element of an academic ranking allows the independent self-construal person to make judgments about personal aptitudes. This inclination was more directly identified in conflict style studies which found independent self-construals to be associated with more competitive postures (Oetzel, 1998). People who are interdependent prefer to think of themselves in terms of "We" since their self-perception relies heavily on group membership and intimate relationships with others who are part of the "clan" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Interdependent self-construal persons might describe themselves as "a mother" or "a Catholic" because those social roles play a significant part in their identity formation. They might consider themselves "intelligent" because they are part of an elite honor society.

Although not directly stated, Markus and Kitayama's (2010) critical review implied that feelings of empathy might have more of an effect on interdependent individuals since that schema encourages "taking

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6844826>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6844826>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)