EGO DEPLETION: IS THE ACTIVE SELF A LIMITED RESOURCE?

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Structure

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Introduction

• Behavior largely influenced by automatic or unconscious processes (Bargh 1997)

• portion involved conscious controlled response substantially important

• Hypotheses of ego depletion:
  • self’s act of volition draw from a limited resource
  • one act of volition will have detrimental impact on subsequent volition
Ego Depletion

- temporary reduction in the self’s capacity or willingness to engage in volitional action caused by prior exercise

- Self’s Resource:
  - is used for all acts of volition
  - Presumed to recover after a period of rest
Experiment 1
Introduction

• Eating radishes instead of chocolate

• Afterwards: measure of self-control in unrelated sphere by testing persistence at frustrating task

• Authors predictions:
  • Self-regulation resembles energy:
    • resisting temptation depletes resource
    • persistence decreases
Experiment 1

Results

• Persistence on puzzle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
<th>Attempts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radish</td>
<td>8.35</td>
<td>19.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate</td>
<td>18.90</td>
<td>34.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No food control</td>
<td>20.86</td>
<td>32.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Results:
  • show initial support for ego depletion
  • Fit the energy model

• initial resisting temptation impaired subsequent persistence at frustrating task
Experiment 2

- Making a meaningful personal choice to perform attitude-relevant behavior caused a similar decrement in persistence
Experiment 3

• Suppressing emotion led to a subsequent drop in performance of solvable anagrams
Experiment 4

- Initial task requiring high self-regulation made people more passive
General Discussion

- Four studies point toward broad pattern of ego depletion

- In each initial act of volition followed by decrement in some other sphere of volition:
  - Exp.1: initial act of self control impaired subsequent self-control
  - Exp.2: responsible decision making impaired subsequent self-control
  - Exp.3: self control lowered performance on task that required self-control
  - Exp.4: initial act of self-control led to increased passivity
Implications

• Resource appears to be surprisingly limited

• Automated responses are wide spread (Bargh, 1997); helps to conserve resource

• Resource important for emergencies, therefore confined to only a small part of everyday life

• Results point toward a valuable and powerful feature of human selfhood
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!