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Embodied Cognition: A Study of Social Loneliness Compensation by Physical Warmth

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Purpose/Background

- Studies have focused on embodied cognition and the unconscious ability for self-regulation.
- Embodied cognition illustrates the connection between our cognitions and our bodies, as well as feedback from the environment.
- Bargh and Shalev (2012) concluded that socially cold people seek physical warmth.

Purpose

- This study focuses on whether awareness of a person's bodily sensations moderates whether socially lonely compensate by seeking physical warmth. I predict that a high awareness in bodily sensation will result in a greater likelihood of compensation. I also predict a low awareness in bodily sensation will result in a lower likelihood of compensation.

Method

Participants (n = 130)

- 78 Male; 52 Females

Measures

- Participants completed a lifestyle activates questionnaire similar to Bargh and Shalev's (2012) which included questions about shower frequency, temperature and durations. Additional questions pertained to preferred room temperature, climate, clothing on a cold day and bedroom color.

Method (Cont.)

- Participants answered the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996) which consists of 20 questions with a 4 point Likert scale (e.g. "How often do you feel isolated from others"). Higher values indicate a greater loneliness.
- Participants answered the Private Body Consciousness (PBC) scale (Miller, Murphy & Buss, 1981) to examine the level of one's bodily sensation awareness. (e.g. "I am sensitive to internal bodily tensions.") Higher values indicate higher awareness of bodily sensations.

Results

- A median split (PBC median = 19) of the data separated participants with high and low awareness of internal bodily sensations. People with high PBC scores should show more social loneliness compensation, than people with low PBC scores.
- For those with low PBC scores (<19) the correlation between loneliness and either shower frequency ($r = -.026, p = .421$) or water temperature ($r = -.065, p = .308$) failed to suggest a direct relation
- For those with high PBC scores (>19) the correlation between loneliness and either shower frequency ($r = -.064, p = .21$) or water temperature ($r = -.155, p = .51$) also failed to suggest a direct relation.

Conclusions

- Bargh and Shalev (2012) found that evidence of embodied cognition: socially cold people sought physical warmth. However, this study did not support their findings.

Limitations and Future Directions

- This study used a sample drawing from online participants only. Participants received a small amount of money for completing the study; using participants only enticed by money may yield biased results.
- A redesign of this study is current being implemented. The study will involve real interaction between the experimenter and participants.
- The study will aim to discover if a warm or cool greeting will influence participant's response to the questionnaire.

References

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Table 1
Correlations Between Social Coldness and Physical Warmth Seeking for Low and High PBC Participants

	Low PBC							High PBC						
	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
1. Shower frequency	-.026	-.090	-.230*	.072	.237*	-.252*	.314*	-.064	.044	.065	.095	.151	.570**	.037
2. Shower temperature	-.065	.373**	.045	.069	-.056	-.176		-.155	.175	.038	.137	-.045	-.106	
3. Shower duration	.083	-.041	.223*	-.009	-.052			-.171	-.094	.002	.054	.082		
4. House temperature	.049	-.187	.043	.208				.097	.080	-.010	-.016			
5. Bedroom color	-.235*	-.046	.082					-.052	-.048	.217*				
6. Clothing on cold day	-.040	.237*						-.137	.011					
7. Locale temperature	-.104							-.108						
8. Social coldness														

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$