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Examining the Effects of Self-Regulation on Self-Presentation

Greg A. Eisenhauer
 Advisor: Erin M. O'Mara, Ph. D.

Self-Regulation and Self-Presentation

- Self-regulation/Self-Control allows us to present the self that we desire peers to see. (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).
- Self-control is described as a muscle, one that can be strengthened and worn out.
 - One way to wear out self-control is through ego-depletion (e.g., though suppression).
- Self-regulatory resources are necessary for positive interpersonal interactions, or self-presentation.
- When motivated to have and maintain a positive sense of self, i.e., self-enhancement, self-presentation will suffer if self-enhancement occurs in a blatant and boastful manner.
- In order to make a positive impression, self-enhancement needs to be curtailed, or expressed subtly.

The Current Experiment

We tested whether self-regulatory resources are necessary for individuals to control their self-enhancing tendencies.

If regulatory resources are necessary for controlling self-enhancing tendencies, depleting regulatory resources should be associated with greater blatant but not subtle self-enhancement compared to control participants.

Method

50 participants were asked to do a thought-task and were randomly assigned to the following conditions:

⊙ *Depletion Condition:* Think about anything you want, *except* for a white bear.

⊙ *Control Condition:* Think about anything you want, *including* a white bear.

Participants then completed measures of blatant (*Self-Enhancement and Self-Protection Strategies Scale*, Hepper, Gramzow & Sedikides, 2010) and subtle (Name-Letter Preference, Bosson, Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2013; Birthday- Number Preference, Kitayama & Rarasawa, 1997) self-enhancement.

Figure 1. Mean scores of blatant self-enhancement

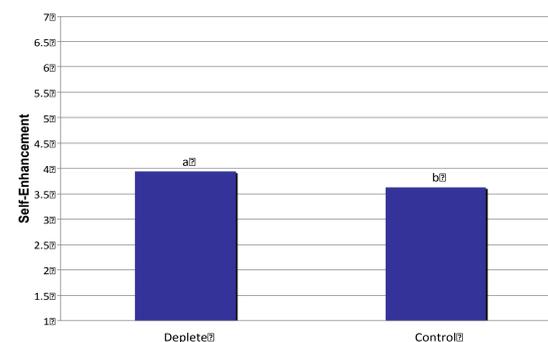
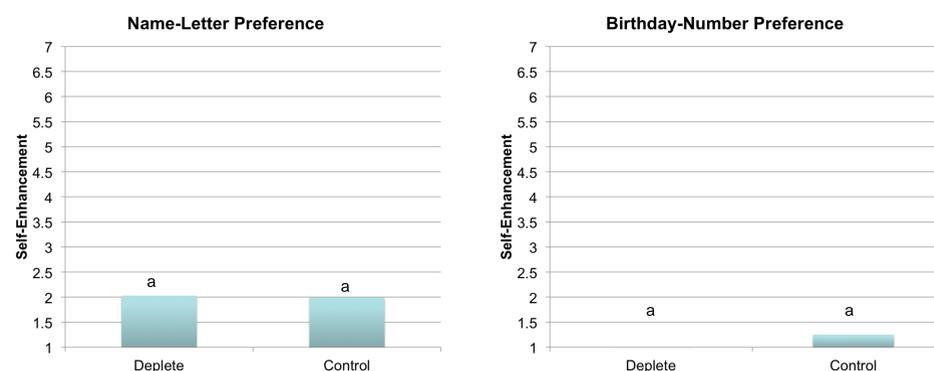


Figure 2. Mean scores of subtle self-enhancement



Results

Participants in the depletion condition reported significantly higher blatant self-enhancement than the control condition, see Figure 1.

Participants in the depletion condition and control condition did not significantly differ in subtle self-enhancement, see Figure 2.

Discussion

We find evidence that regulatory depletion does have an effect on how people self-enhance; blatant self-enhancement occurs more when people are depleted compared to when their regulatory resources are intact. Subtle self-enhancement, however, is not influenced by self-regulatory depletion.

When depleted, we are less able to control our behavior and thus self-enhance in ways that are interpersonally unfavorable.

These findings suggest that self-regulation is critical in being able to self-enhance in ways that do not compromise self-presentation.

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