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

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- 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 lower likelihood of compensation. I also predict a low awareness in bodily sensations will result in a greater likelihood of compensation. Between our cognitions and our bodies, as well as unconscious ability for self-regulation.

**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.
- 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.

**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.

**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**


**Table 1**

| Correlations Between Social Coldness and Physical Warmth Seeking for Low and High PBC Participants |
|-----------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                                             | 8  | 7  | 6 | 5  | 4 | 3  | 2 |
| Low PBC                                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1. Shower frequency                         | -.026 | -.090 | -.230” | .072 | .237” | .252” | .314” |
| 2. Shower temperature                       | -.065 | .373” | .045 | .069 | -.056 | -.176 |
| 3. Shower duration                          | .083 | -.041 | .223” | -.009 | .052 |
| 4. House temperature                        | .049 | -.187 | .043 | .208 |
| 5. Bedroom color                            | -.235” | .046 | .082 |
| 6. Clothing on cold day                     | -.040 | .237” |
| 7. Locale temperature                       | -.104 |
| 8. Social coldness                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| High PBC                                    | -.064 | .044 | .065 | .095 | .151 | .570” | .037 |

**Note:** p < .05, “p < .01