

EGO DEPLETION: IS THE ACTIVE SELF A LIMITED RESOURCE?

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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:

Condition	Time (min)	Attempts
Radish	8,35	19,40
Chocolate	18,90	34,29
No food control	20,86	32,81

- Results:

- show initial support for ego depletion
 - Fit the energy model
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- 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!