

Self-knowledge activation and the scope of attention*

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INTRODUCTION

Self-knowledge is a complex structure, composed of many different aspects. Depending on what aspect is currently active (accessible) different regulatory consequences arise (5, 9). Most up-to-date studies were focused on the effects of the momentary accessibility of self-standards (e.g. 2). The present studies add to this knowledge by focusing on the can self – the element of self-knowledge, which pertains to the beliefs about one’s capabilities and potentials (1, 7). The global-local visual paradigm was used to compare the scope of attention after activating the *can self vs self-standards*. The *impossible self* was added as the additional control.

Numerous studies show that positive affect leads to a global bias (broadened attentional focus), whereas negative affect leads to a local bias (narrowed attentional focus) (3, 4). Assuming that:

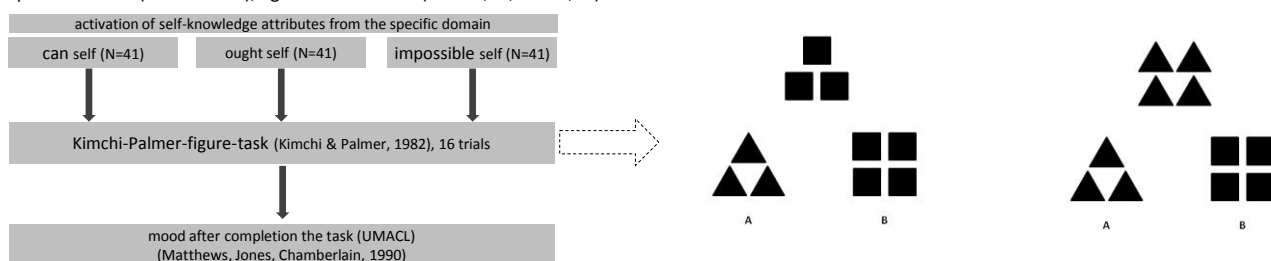
- priming the self-standard increases the accessibility between actual self and self-standard as well as the resulting negative emotional state (11),
- priming can self attributes increases the accessibility of the optimistic self-knowledge regarding one’s capabilities and potentials.

It was hypothesized that:

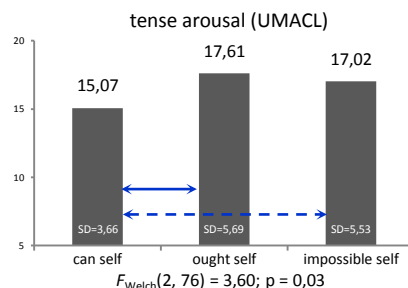
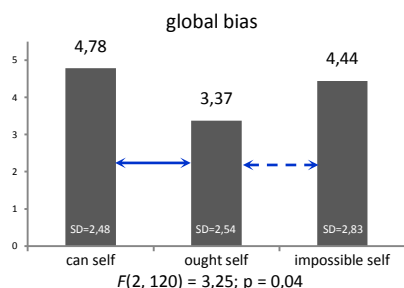
- Activation of the can self results in a stronger global bias as compared to the activation of self-standards (here: the ought self).
- Activation of the impossible self (the desired attributes that are perceived as impossible to be achieved) results in the stronger local bias as compared to both the can self and the ought self.

STUDY 1: PROCEDURE

Participants: $N = 123$ (50% women), aged from 19 to 27 ($M = 21,78, SD = 1,72$)



STUDY 1: RESULTS



STUDY 2

Aim of the study: the replication of the global bias effect for the can self activation.

Participants: $N=120$ (50% women), aged from 19 to 28 ($M=21,98; SD=1,84$)

Similar procedure with the following exceptions:

- the experiment was run in groups of 2 -5 participants (study 1 was run individually)
- equal duration of manipulation procedure (15 min) for every participant (in study 1 it was more interindividually differentiated)
- no measurement of mood
- 4 experimental conditions (additional controls for the can self)

global bias: $M (SD)$			
can self	ought self	ideal self	non-self-reference control
4,60 (2,84)	4,50 (2,74)	5,43 (2,25)	4,20 (2,89)
$F(3, 116) = 1,15; p = 0,33$			

DISCUSSION

- Study 1 supports the hypothesis that activation of the can self leads to a stronger global bias compared to the activation of the ought self.
- It does not seem however that this is caused by the positive affect. There is no difference in the level of global processing between the can self and the impossible self conditions. Tense arousal (the aspect of negative mood measured by the UMACL) after completion the task seems to be lower for the can self condition as compared to both the ought self and the impossible self conditions.
- Construal level theory (CLT) by Trope and Liberman (2010) may provide alternative interpretation.
- Unfortunately, study 2 did not replicate the effects obtained in study 1. Thus, the results are not conclusive yet. Further experimentation is needed.

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