

Stony Brook University
The Graduate School
Doctoral Defense Announcement

Abstract

Level of Construal and the Ideal Self: Implications for Attraction and Support Provision

By

Karen L. Langsam

Research illustrates that our evaluative attraction to a potential relationship partner increases as we perceive him or her as emulating the type of person we ideally strive to become. The present work examined whether a contextual moderator, level of construal of action representation, constrains this proposed process whereby people construe their relationship choices as reflections of their own important characteristics, aims, and values. Construing action in abstract, purpose-oriented terms (relative to concrete, process-oriented terms) was hypothesized to influence attraction to individuals approximating the ideal self, and the type of social support one provides to such individuals in stressful situations. Four experiments were designed to test these hypotheses. Experiments 1 & 2 examined whether level of construal impacted participants' preferences to be associated, at varying degrees, with individuals who either do or do not emulate their ideal selves. Experiments 3 and 4 examined how participants' construal levels impacted their feelings about the appropriateness of providing support to others that was either concordant or discordant with their own support ideals. Results from these four studies revealed that when thinking abstractly individuals were most attracted to target peers that emulated the type of person they were ideally striving to become and desired for these targets to formally represent them in a student organization; interestingly however, they did not choose these targets as the interaction partners with whom they most wanted to work closely with and provide support to in an upcoming stressful situation. Further, level of construal was found to impact one's perceptions of social support appropriateness in discordant social support interactions. Implications for person evaluation and interventions aimed at ameliorating discordant social support interactions among close others are discussed.

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Time: 2:00pm **Dissertation Advisor:** Antonio L. Freitas, Ph.D.

Place: Rm. 223 Javits Lecture Center