



PERGAMON

Personality and Individual Differences 29 (2000) 1141–1152

PERSONALITY AND
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

Do we need positive illusions to carry out plans? Illusion and instrumental coping

Belinda M. Boyd-Wilson^{a, b, *}, Frank H. Walkey^b, John McClure^b,
Dianne E. Green^b

^a*Psychology Section, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, School of Management, Private Bag 31914 Lower Hutt, Wellington, New Zealand*

^b*Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand*

Received 7 April 1999; received in revised form 29 November 1999; accepted 13 December 1999

Abstract

This study tested the theory that positive illusions and instrumental (problem-focused) coping behaviours are related (Brown, J. D. (1993). *Coping with stress: The beneficial role of positive illusions*. In A. P. Turnbull, J. M. Patterson, S. K. Behr, D. L. Murphy, J. G. Marquis, & M. J. Blue-Banning (Eds.), *Cognitive coping, families, and disability*, Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.). Positive illusion was assessed as a discrepancy between positive bias towards the self in trait ratings and positive bias towards average others, where ratings were self-favouring. Problem-focused coping was assessed through recall of coping with a recent stressful situation. The results showed that positive illusion scores were unrelated to problem-focused coping scores. It was suggested that although individuals need to be positive to cope well they do not need positive illusions. Tests for gender differences showed that males held more positive illusions than females. No gender differences were found for problem-focused coping but females used emotion-focused coping more than males to cope with a recent stressful situation. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Positive illusion; Instrumental coping; Problem-focused coping; Emotion-focused coping; Gender differences

* Corresponding author. Fax: +64-4-570-5278.

E-mail address: boybel@topnz.ac.nz (B.M. Boyd-Wilson).

1. Introduction

Positive illusion involves a general tendency to perceive the self more favourably overall than most others are perceived (see Taylor & Brown, 1988, for a review). For example, most drivers believe that they are better than average (McCormick, Walkey, & Green, 1986; Svenson, 1981), most people believe that they are less likely than others to experience negative events such as being a victim of crime (Perloff & Fetzer, 1986), and most people rate their own traits more positively and less negatively than they rate most others' (Boyd-Wilson, McClure, & Walkey, In preparation (a); Brown, 1986).

The tendency to hold positive illusions is characteristic of Westernized populations which value the self over the collective (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). It is more strongly associated with moderate or high as opposed to low global psychological well-being (Boyd-Wilson et al., In preparation (a)). It has been proposed that positive illusion is also linked to instrumental cognitions and behaviours (Brown, 1993; Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988). For example, Brown claimed that illusions are especially useful when people cope actively with stress.

The coping process itself may work in the following way: Once an event is appraised as stressful, that is, taxing a person's resources (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985), it is assessed in terms of potential harm, loss, or challenge. Resources, whether psychological or material, derived from the self or others, are mustered. Coping is directed towards altering an event, transforming its implications (problem-focused strategies), or accepting the event where it is perceived to be uncontrollable but reducing negative affect that it has caused (emotion-focused strategies). Successfully applied, problem-focused coping strategies produce well-being, although a mixture of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies is often used in practice (Brown, 1993; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1985; Lazarus, 1966; Vitaliano, Russo, Carr, Maiuro, & Becker, 1985).

Brown suggested that if people hold positive illusions about themselves and their abilities, they are more likely to appraise an event as manageable, feel that they have a range of resources to apply to the situation at hand, and use successful coping strategies. Thus, it should follow that the tendencies to hold positive illusions and to use problem-focused coping to deal with stress are positively related. People who hold positive illusions may be likely to take effective action when faced with stressful situations.

There is evidence that supports this proposal. Taylor and Gollwitzer (1995) examined whether people use more positive illusion when they implement plans in a postdecisional phase as opposed to appraising problematic situations in a predecisional phase. The authors proposed that when people deliberate the pros and cons of their options in a given situation, they are more inclined to be relatively realistic about their ability. Conversely, once individuals have decided on a goal, they are more inclined to have positive illusions about their ability, because they need to muster resources to achieve the goal. Taylor and Gollwitzer induced an implemental mind-set in some university student participants by getting them to plan stages of a complex personal project where a course of action had been decided on and there was a determination to achieve the project. In other participants, the authors induced a deliberative mindset. These individuals considered how they would deal with a resolvable complex personal problem where a course of action had not been decided on. In a control condition, no mindset

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات