IDENTITY VS. REGULATORY CAPACITY:

EXAMINING TWO EXPLANATIONS OF PERSEVERANCE

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Perseverance is explained by at least two self-related processes. First, people persevere because they are motivated to behave in a way that is consistent with their self-image\(^1\). For example, previous research\(^2\) showed that participants who were publically informed that they were expected to perform well on an upcoming anagram task spent more time trying to solve the anagrams than participants who were publically informed that they were expected to perform poorly on the task. Additionally, perseverance can be explained by self-control capacity. Research\(^3\) shows that engaging in self-control reduces the capacity to engage in further acts of self-control, such that participants who previously engaged in emotion regulation spent less time solving anagrams than participants who had not regulated their emotions. The purpose of this study was to begin examining whether these explanations are competing or interactive mechanisms of perseverance. To test this, participants completed either a regulatory-depleting task or a non-depleting task. Participants were then led to believe that they were either expected to perform well or poorly on an upcoming anagram task, or they were given no expectations about their performance. Results showed that participants persevered more when they completed the non-depleting task than when they completed the regulatory-depleting task. The feedback had no statistically significant effect. In short, these data indicate that self-regulation capacity explains perseverance better than self-consistency motives. However, these data in the context of the broader literature may suggest that self-control capacity accounts for private perseverance, but self-consistency motives account for public displays of perseverance.

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