Three Essays on Information Processing in Goal Pursuit

A THESIS

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Abstract

The three essays focus on different information processing mechanisms used by individuals while performing tasks and pursuing goals. While the first two essays discuss quantitative goals and the effect of roundness on the goal pursuit; the third essay is in the realm of visual representation, it elucidates spatial processing while traversing paths and schemas.

In Essay 1, titled '**Be Precise or Round it Up: How Roundness of Goals Influence Goal Attractiveness and Achievability Perceptions'**, we argue that though non-round or precise numbers are typically associated with smaller magnitudes (Thomas, Simon &Kadiyali 2010; Thomas, Morwitz &Pyone 2010; Yan & Pena-Marin 2017), lower magnitude goals expressed in non-round (vs. round) numbers are considered more difficult. This happens because non-round goals are more disfluent (Kettle &Ha¨ubl 2010). Disfluency has a spillover effect on the perceived difficulty of the task. Further, we identify three boundary conditions: 1) estimation of effort per unit task, 2) focus on the process, and 3) construal level moderate this relationship.

In Essay 2, titled **'Counting to a Round Number *Precisely*: Effect of Symmetric Chunking on Ease of the Process and Counting Confidence'**, we argue that though usage of precise (non-round) numbers is associated with confidence in information (Janiszewski and Uy 2008; Mason *et al.* 2013; Jerez-Fernandez *et al.* 2014), individuals are less confident of counting non-round number of objects. Counting and verifying counts has its use in determining output, stock keeping, inventory management, and auditing. When counting objects, individuals make small chunks. The process of chunking is easier for round (vs. non-round) numbers, impacting an individual's confidence in counting correctly.

In Essay 3, titled '**Prefer Linear or Crooked? A Visual Perception Perspective'**, we argue that individuals perceive results and destinations reached on traversing crooked (vs. linear) paths and schemas as more adventurous. We draw from the literature in diverse domains and theorize that linear paths are associated with peace and serenity, while crooked paths are associated with thrill and adventurousness. This effect persists not only for physical paths but also for schematic maps. We show that the relationship between the path crookedness and the benefit of the end destination is mediated by the fit between the path and the destination. The effect is stronger for individuals who tend to process information visually more than verbally.

Keywords: *Information processing, Round numbers, Goal setting, Goal perceptions, Processing fluency, Construal level, Endowed progress, Confidence of counting, Chunking, Visual perception, Visual processing, Verbal processing, Visit likelihood, Judgement, Decision Making.*

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