Construal Level Theory: Implications for Construal, Prediction and Evaluation

Construal level theory proposes that temporal distance changes people’s responses to future events by changing the way people mentally represent those events. The greater the temporal distance, the more likely are events to be represented in terms of a few abstract features that convey the perceived essence of the events (high-level construals), rather than in terms of more concrete and incidental details of the events (low-level construals). The informational and evaluative implications of high-level construals, compared to those of low-level construals, should therefore have more impact on responses to distant future events than near future events. This article explores the implications of construal level theory for temporal changes in evaluation, prediction, and choice. We suggest that temporal construal is a general cognitive mechanism that underlies a broad range of psychological consequences of temporal distance.

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