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"A Positive Example" on Intergroup Bias : A Herd Mentality and "A Counter-example": Celebrity Effect

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Abstract

In order not to be ostracized by society, individuals develop with collaboration as much as possible. Therefore, it is universal to be immersed in the influence of people around, especially under those elites. The research shows under which circumstance celebrity effect will defeat intergroup bias when people do not get the hang of things. However, with people's changing goals and needs, intergroup constraint (following majority or miniority) is becoming frailer and outgroup cooperation turns into a new win-win option.

Keywords

Collaboration; Celebrity effect; Intergroup bias; Intergroup constraint; Outgroup cooperation.

1. Introduction

In the trend of globalization and equality, people is tending to be similar. However, in consideration of the diversification of growing background, races, gender, wealth etc, consciously and unconsciously, a portion of humanity still get some sense of a life out of feeling well. This is known as intergroup bias and "manifests itself on the level of attitudes (prejudge), cognition (stereotypes), and behavior (discrimination)" (Hans, Alex, Christian, 2018) [1]. Since there are numerous groups, people from the same group are likely to be influenced by the peers which is called the herd mentality. It is a process from being classfied by similarity to behaving more congruously. The most famous Asch conformity experiments (Solomon Asch, 1951) [2] demonstrated how group psychology would affect individual decisions, even towards huge mistakes sometimes. To some extent, if majority is defined as "us", then, the "them" will be minority. In special cases, the intergroup bias will propagate between "the major ordinary people" and "minor elitists". (Yarrow Dunham, 2018) [3]

Throughout history, it is obvious that no significant changes would happen without great men. Montesquieu to the Enlightenment, Nikola Tesla to transmitting electrical power, Steve Jobs to portable work are all distinguished positive examples ranging from ideological field to science fields. (Robert W. Firestone Joyce Catlett, 2009) [4]. Nevertheless, their success in these fields have not exactly been a long picnic. Sometimes the world is even their hostile. When the elitists' idea is against most people's will, how would people (as a part of the group "the mass") react? With limited information about the reformation, whom should people choose to believe? Will all the changes without "blood" turn to be "Glorious Revolution"? (Keirmartland, 2016) [5]

In this essay, an experiment is designed to study why positive individual power seems to be "a counter-example" of intergroup bias and to what level people will conform to the majority.

1.1. Methods

Participants

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Participants were fifty 15-year-old students who were divided into 2 groups randomly and averagely. Also, their learning situation was investigated in advance. (It was clear that what level of difficulty of question they could answer.) Forty staff about participants' age (pretending they were normal students) and one director were informed of all the answers of the test before.

Matters needing attention

To avoid any emotional effects, participants and staff were not allowed to socialize verbally. The director who raised the question must not make any response or expression to their answers so that they could not tell whether their answer was wrong. The staff who were asked to make the wrong choice must be different for each round in case the participants would define them as "poor students".

1.2. Procedure

Every participant was asked to take the test in turn and alone. (There were forty staff, one director and one participant in each complete experiment.) They were firstly informed that staff A,B,C and D were the most intelligent students in the class and the others were about the same level. Also, they were allowed to hesitate for 2 seconds when making the choices. (It was an indication that they could observe the staff's reaction.) They were placed where they could see the "top students" movements clearly. They were also told privately that "cheating" would not be punished.

There were 15 multiple (a or b) choices ranging from 3 different levels. They were asked to raise the left hand for choosing option a and right hand for option b. The answers for each choice would be published immediately only for Group Two participants.

The first round

The participant α faced 5 choices what he was pretty sure about the answer. For the first 3 questions, let most staff including all the "most intelligent students" (30/40) choose the right options. For the forth one, asking all the top students to make the right choice and so did the few of others (12/36). For the last one, let most the intelligent students (3/4) make the wrong choice and most of the others (27/36) choose the right one.

The second round

The participant α faced 5 choices what he only had some idea of. For the first 3 questions, let all the "top students" and most of the others (27/36) make the correct choices. For the forth one, let all the top students and only a few of the others (12/36) choose the right one. For the last one, let most the top students (3/4) choose the wrong option and most the rest students (27/36) choose the correct one.

The third round

The participant α faced 5 choices what they could not make any heads or tails. For the first 3 questions, let all the "top students" and most of the others (27/36) raise hands for the right choices. For the forth one, again let all the top students and only a few of the others (12/36) choose the right one. For the last one last one, let most the top students (3/4) make the wrong choice and most the rest (27/36) make the correct choice.

These three rounds were repeated for the rest 49 participants, except posting the answers after each choice for Group Two participants.

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1.3. Results

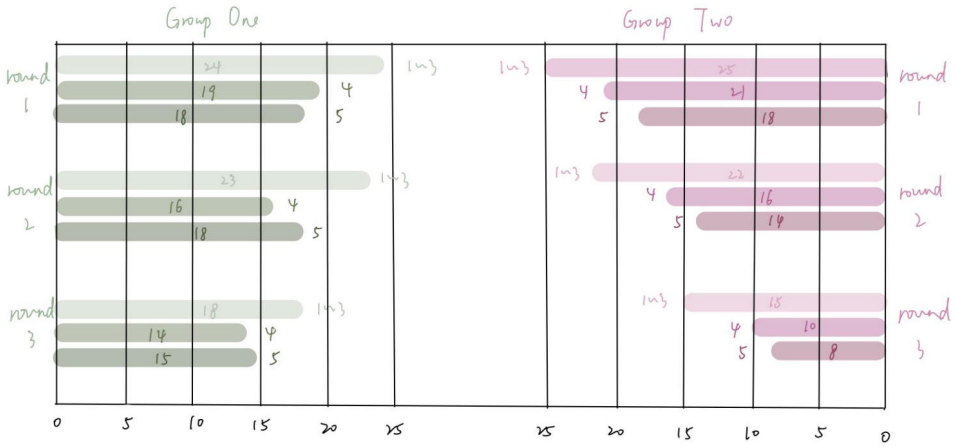

Figure 1. The number of students who answered correctly

As is presented in figure 1, for the round one, since participants knew all the knowledge related to the questions, everyone made the right choice. For the next two questions, with the external interference, their accuracy rate dropped a little. However, the whole accuracy of Group Two was slightly higher.

In round two, almost everyone answered the first three questions correctly with the "help" of the staff. Disturbed by the majority, even they had some rough idea of question 4, only a few more than half of the participants got the right choice. For the last question, more students chose to believe in most of the top students, so the accuracy for Group Two fell sharply.

In round three, the overall accuracy of Group Two was apparently way below Group One's. Most students made the correct choice for the last two questions in Group One and the specific data were almost the same. However, less than 1/3 students in Group Two got the right choice for the last question.

2. Conclusion

2.1. Discussion and Limitation

Since Group Two participants were informed the answers at once, their brains would determine which would be closer to the correct answer between their intuition and accuracy of the last question, particularly for the next following question. They would tend to distrust those students who lost their previous choices. Correspondingly, if they answered the questions correctly themselves, they would have more confidence in next one. In other words, they valued themselves over the external reaction. It was most evident for what they had only a sketchy knowledge.

For the areas they were absolutely sure, others' choices only had little influence no matter how intelligent they are or how high their accuracy has been. Furthermore, their belief in themselves would basically remain the same.

To some extent, when they made choices against their will and finally lost the points, they would be regret. This situation would be worst for the knowledge they were very familiar with. However, as is said by Amy Summerville (Amy Summerville, 2011)[6], even though someone experience regret negatively, there would still be hopeful emotions. In this case, they would attempt to have more confidence in themselves and care about the outside less when dealing with the future choices.

For the areas participants barely knew, they had to rely more on others' choices. They were troubled longer when the majority and top students made straightly different selections. For

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the revealing answers part, they would go after top students' choices. Even though they were proven to be wrong immediately, participants would still show some preference to the smarter ones for the following questions. Inversely, if they were not informed the answers, they were inclined to the choice of majority rather than someone outstanding. (John F. Dovidio et al., 2002) [7]

On the other hand, even we designed the experiment to be as ideal as possible. The participants were at the age when they were competitive, taught to be persuasible and cared about others' opinions. And the "cheating allowance" was indicted by their seats and the director's words. As the detailed information of the participants could not be investigated, some of the participants might not be desirable. Someone might be so well-educated that he was shamed on cheating. Also, someone who cared too much about others' opinions would miss some questions which they could have answered correctly. Moreover, someone with super confidence would focus less on others (Alex Lickerman, 2012) [8]. In addition, it was possible that someone might be extremely lucky to guess the answers. Even if those four students were emphasized to be the most intelligent, since participants were not familiar with them, it might not be so believable.

2.2. General Discussion and Extension

Unlike the information asymmetry of past years, individuals have access to more information thanks to the technology and freedom of expression. Therefore, it is easier to tell which choice will be most advantaged. For those indistinguishable situations, celebrity effect sometimes may strong enough to defeat intergroup bias. Especially for those who dare to take challenges, they are more willing to make the same choice as the minority with good reputation. (Patricia A. Schuler, 1997) [9]

Nowadays, more and more groups are based on temporary common interest, people would switch from one group to another regularly, which leads to the fickle of intergroup's formation. It is not so surprising that people would make decisions against the group's will and perform worship to outgroup members. (John M. Grohol, 2018) [10]

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