



Experimental demonstrations of the earned dogmatism effect using a variety of optimal manipulations: Commentary and response to Calin-Jageman (2018)[☆]

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ABSTRACT

According to the Earned Dogmatism Hypothesis, social norms entitle experts to be more dogmatic (closed-minded) than non-experts. Consequently, individuals who occupy the expert role are more closed-minded than non-experts. Ottati, Price, Wilson, and Sumaktoyo (2015) originally documented this effect in two sets of experiments, the “switching roles” and “success versus failure” experiments. Calin-Jageman (2018) obtained the earned dogmatism effect when replicating the “switching roles” experiments, but not when replicating the “success versus failure” experiments. Two hypotheses can account for this divergent replication pattern. The “restrictive condition” hypothesis postulates the earned dogmatism effect is limited to highly restrictive and unrealistic conditions (i.e., switching roles experiments that entail projective judgments in hypothetical situations), and fails to replicate under less restrictive conditions (e.g., conditions that evoke success versus failure, real world situations). The “optimal manipulation” hypothesis postulates the earned dogmatism effect is easily replicated in experiments that employ optimal manipulations of *relative* expertise, but less easily replicated in experiments that employ sub-optimal manipulations. According to this view, optimal expertise manipulations elicit the earned dogmatism effect, even under non-restrictive conditions. The “optimal manipulation” hypothesis is supported in three new experiments. In these experiments, the earned dogmatism effect is obtained using an optimal manipulation that is explicitly relative, an optimal manipulation that prompts participants to remember real-world situations, and an optimal manipulation of success versus failure. When predicting the earned dogmatism effect size across studies (Ottati, Price, Wilson, & Sumaktoyo, 2015; Calin-Jageman, 2018; three new experiments), the “optimal manipulation” hypothesis is also favored.

1. Introduction

Closed-minded (dogmatic) cognition is directionally biased, a tendency to select and process information in a manner that reinforces prior opinions or expectations. Open-minded cognition is directionally unbiased, a tendency to select and process information in a manner that is not biased by prior opinions or expectations (Ottati & Wilson, 2018; Price, Ottati, Wilson, & Kim, 2015; see also Church & Samuelson, 2017). Directional bias in cognition reflects a core concern within social psychology (e.g., Briñol & Petty, 2012; Cooper, 2007; Eagly, Chen, Chaiken, & Shaw-Barnes, 1999; Fazio & Towles-Schwen, 1999; Schwarz & Bless, 2007; Wyer & Srull, 1989). Importantly, open-minded cognition varies across both individuals and situations (Ottati, Wilson, &

Price, 2018; for related work see Briñol, Rucker, Tormala, & Petty, 2004; Kruglanski, 2004; Jost, 2017; Jost & Jost, 2009; Rokeach & Kemp, 1960; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 2014; Tetlock, 1992).

According to the Earned Dogmatism Hypothesis, social norms entitle experts to be more dogmatic than “nonexperts” (Ottati, Price, Wilson, & Sumaktoyo, 2015; see also Trafimow & Sniezek, 1994). Experts have “earned” the privilege of harboring more dogmatic opinions and beliefs, presumably because they have already given extensive thought to issues within a domain. Because nonexperts possess more limited knowledge, social norms dictate they should be more open-minded (see Kruglanski & Mayselless, 1987; Leary & Hoyle, 2015 for awareness of personal limitation). Thus, the Earned Dogmatism Hypothesis predicts that the effect of expertise on dogmatic cognition is

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mediated by perceptions of normative entitlement (Ottati et al., 2015; see Kruglanski, 2004; Na, Choi, & Sul, 2013; Tetlock, Peterson, & Berry, 1993 for linkages between norms and cognitive style).

When discussing the Earned Dogmatism Hypothesis, it is important to clarify the nature of the hypothesized cause and effect. The hypothesized cause is self-perceived expertise, not actual expertise or knowledge. Self-perceived and actual expertise are conceptually and empirically distinct (Dunning, 2011; Fisher & Keil, 2016), and may produce different effects on dogmatic cognition (Ottati, Wilson, Price, & Sumaktoyo, 2018; Price et al., 2015). Also, unlike actual expertise, self-perceived expertise is malleable and varies across situations (Ottati et al., 2018). Thus, a realistic conceptualization of self-perceived expertise must acknowledge that the expert role is relative and situation-specific. For example, a graduate student may occupy the “expert” role when discussing academic issues with high school students, but occupy the “nonexpert” role when discussing academic issues with a world renowned scholar at a conference.

As implied by this example, the Earned Dogmatism Hypothesis postulates that self-perceived expertise influences the individual's situation-specific level of open-mindedness when conversing with another person or group. In conceptualizing this outcome, it is important to maintain a realistic and balanced perspective. Namely, although open-mindedness is typically desirable, the earned dogmatism hypothesis does not presume closed-mindedness is always inappropriate, or that “licensing” closed-mindedness is always undesirable. Indeed, when individuals encounter extremely unrealistic or morally objectionable claims, a closed-minded response may be appropriate and virtuous (Ottati et al., 2018; see also Tetlock et al., 1993). It should also be recognized that the earned dogmatism hypothesis does not imply experts are extremely dogmatic or closed-minded. Extreme dogmatism probably requires the convergence of multiple conditions. The Earned Dogmatism Hypothesis postulates that self-perceived expertise is one factor that increases dogmatic cognition, not the only factor.

1.1. Original earned dogmatism experiments (Ottati et al., 2015)

Ottati et al. (2015) marshalled support for the Earned Dogmatism Hypothesis in two sets of experiments, the “switching roles” (“prospective”) and “success versus failure” (“task difficulty”) experiments. The “switching roles” (“prospective”) experiments employed a within-subject manipulation of relative expertise by asking each participant to imagine two different situations. In one case, participants imagined they were engaged in a political conversation with individuals possessing political knowledge equal to their own (nonexpert participant). In another case, participants imagined the individuals possessed political knowledge less than their own level of knowledge (expert participant). Participants reported that they would be less open-minded (more dogmatic) in the expert condition (Ottati et al., 2015; ORIGE6, Table 1 & Fig. 1). This earned dogmatism effect was mediated by situation-specific feelings of normative entitlement (Ottati et al., 2015; see Trafimow & Sniezek, 1994 for related work).

The “success versus failure” (“task difficulty”) experiments manipulated self-perceived expertise between subjects. “Experts” succeeded at an easy knowledge-based task, whereas “nonexperts” failed at a difficult knowledge-based task (e.g., multiple choice test; see Trafimow & Sniezek, 1994 for similar manipulations). To reinforce this manipulation, these experiments included additional procedures that accentuated perceptions of high versus low expertise (e.g., false feedback indicating participants scored at the 86th versus 14th percentile). Afterwards, participants rated their open-mindedness toward *anyone* in *any situation* (“I am open to considering other viewpoints”). In three experiments, Ottati et al. (2015) found success elicited less open-mindedness (more dogmatism) than failure (see Trafimow & Sniezek, 1994 for related findings). Effect sizes are provided in Table 1 and Fig. 1 (ORIGE2, ORIGE3, and ORIGE4).

1.2. Replications (Calin-Jageman, 2018)

Calin-Jageman (2018) obtained the earned dogmatism effect in five replications of the switching roles experiment (Table 1, Fig. 1; REPE6 studies). In contrast, in five replications of the success versus failure experiments, Calin-Jageman (2018) obtained nonsignificant effects with an average effect size close to zero (Table 1, Fig. 1; REPE3 and REPE4 studies). He reports a Q-Statistic that suggests some factor produced non-random differences when comparing the success versus failure effects in the original experiments to the null effects in his replications of these experiments. Thus, his null effects may be due to some unknown difference or moderator that eliminated the success versus failure effect in his replications.

Yet, as Calin-Jageman (2018) has noted, it is unlikely that participant characteristics, historical changes, cultural differences, or familiarity with experimental materials can account for his null findings when replicating the success versus failure experiments. Moreover, he demonstrated that differential effects on affective states cannot account for his divergent pattern of replication. Thus, regardless of what factor is at play, it seems clear that exact replications of the success versus failure experiments do not yield a reliable earned dogmatism effect.

1.3. Restrictive condition versus optimal manipulation hypothesis

Why did the earned dogmatism effect successfully replicate in the “switching roles” experiments, but not in exact replications of the “success versus failure” experiments? Many differences between the two experimental paradigms might account for this discrepancy. The “switching roles” paradigm asked participants to predict their reactions to imaginary or future situations; and employed a within-subject manipulation that encourages participants to directly compare the “non-expert” and “expert” role (increasing focus on the expertise manipulation). The “success versus failure” paradigm assessed present cognitive reactions to people in general; and employed a between-subject manipulation that does not encourage this comparison.

Calin-Jageman (2018) does not provide a formal hypothesis that accounts for his divergent replication pattern. However, he suggests it may indicate the earned dogmatism effect only emerges under highly restrictive conditions, namely, switching roles experiments that entail projective judgments in imaginary or future situations. Under this interpretation, null effects obtained in his success versus failure (task difficulty) replications provide a valid basis for concluding the effect is limited to unrealistic conditions, and fails to replicate in conditions that evoke success versus failure. According to this “restrictive condition” account, the switching roles experiments replicated the earned dogmatism effect because they tested this effect under “restrictive” conditions, whereas the success versus failure experiments did not replicate this effect because they tested this effect under “non-restrictive” conditions.

Calin-Jageman (2018) acknowledges that alternative interpretations may account for his findings. Indeed, in describing communications with our lab (e.g., V. Ottati, personal communication, 6/2/2017), he alludes to alternatives that are compatible with our preferred interpretation, namely, the “optimal manipulation” hypothesis. According to this interpretation, optimal manipulations of expert role occupation will replicate the earned dogmatism effect, even under “non-restrictive” conditions. Our conceptualization of an “optimal manipulation” is rooted in Harry Triandis's research (Triandis, 1972; Triandis, 1980; Triandis, Marin, Hui, Lisansky, & Ottati, 1984). This work emphasizes that social roles are *relative* and *situation-specific*. Individuals occupy a role when the situation places them in a *role-pair*. For example, social norms encourage a woman to act “motherly” when conversing with her son at home, but not when conversing with her boss at work. A manipulation that simply reminds a woman she is a “mother” may not increase motherly (role-congruent) behavior toward *anyone* in *any situation*. However, a role occupation manipulation

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