



Reports

The effects of winning and losing on perceived group variability

Constantina Badea^{a,b,*}, Markus Brauer^{c,d}, Mark Rubin^e^a Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, France^b Université Lille 3, France^c Center National de la Recherche Scientifique, France^d Université de Clermont Ferrand, France^e The University of Newcastle, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 August 2011

Revised 8 March 2012

Available online 16 March 2012

Keywords:

Variability

Cohesiveness

Performance

ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that the people in low status, negatively-valued groups are perceived to be more homogeneous than the people in high status, positively-valued groups. The present research investigated the possibility of an opposite effect in which people perceive positive groups to be more homogeneous than negative groups. The researchers hypothesized that winning groups would be perceived to be more homogeneous than losing groups because group homogeneity is associated with group cohesiveness, and group cohesiveness has a positive value in the context of an intergroup competition. In a first experiment ($N = 175$), target groups varied according to their objective group variability and whether they won or lost a competition. As predicted, winning groups were perceived to be significantly more homogeneous than losing groups regardless of their objective variability. In a second experiment ($N = 186$), these effects were replicated using different social groups, and the effect of group performance on homogeneity judgments was mediated by perceptions of group cohesiveness.

© 2012 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Judgments of a group's homogeneity are highly contextual. They depend on the group's status (Badea & Deschamps, 2009; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991), size (Badea & Askevis-Leherpeux, 2005; Simon & Brown, 1987), power (Brauer, 2001; Guinote, Judd, & Brauer, 2002), the intergroup comparison dimension (Rubin & Badea, 2007, 2010), and whether or not the perceiver belongs to the target group (Park & Judd, 1990; Quattrone & Jones, 1980). It is now well established in the literature that the members of low status groups, minority groups, and groups with low social power are evaluated as being more similar one to each other than the members of high status groups, majority groups, and groups with high social power.

Two interpretations have been suggested to explain this effect. First, this difference has been interpreted as a *subjective perceptual bias* due to perceivers' knowledge of each group's social position. This bias may be due to the attributions that people make about group members' behavior (Brauer & Bourhis, 2006). Overbeck, Tiedens, and Brion (2006) found that people tend to make dispositional attributions for the behavior of high power individuals but situational attributions for the behavior of low power individuals. Consequently, members of high social power groups are more individualized than

those of low social power groups. Another possible explanation for this subjective perceptual bias is that individuals are more attentive to members of advantaged groups (Brauer & Bourhis, 2006). For example, people make more mistakes in identifying members of disadvantaged groups than they do in identifying members of advantaged groups (Fiske, Haslam, & Fiske, 1991). They also understand and react more quickly to demands from members of advantaged groups than from members of disadvantaged groups (Holtgraves, 1994).

An alternative, but complementary, explanation is that these differences reflect *objective differences* in the variability of socially asymmetrical groups that can occur in the absence of knowledge about each group's social position (Guinote et al., 2002). Research has shown that members of high power groups talk longer, describe themselves in more abstract and dispositional terms, and mention more interests and activities than members of low power groups (Brauer, 2001; Chappe, Brauer, & Castano, 2004; Guinote et al., 2002). In addition, Berdahl and Martorana (2006) showed that high power individuals display a higher number of positive emotions than low power individuals.

The subjective and objective explanations are complementary, and they support the idea that perceptions of homogeneity tend to have negative associations. In particular, homogeneous groups are usually low status, low power, minority groups, whose members are perceived in less individualistic terms, receive less attention, and display less positive emotions. Homogeneous groups are also more often the subject of stereotyping and discrimination than heterogeneous groups (Brauer & Er-rafy, 2011). However, some studies suggest that judgments of a group's homogeneity can be relatively flexible and

* Corresponding author at: Université Paris Ouest Nanterre, Département de psychologie (UFR SPSE), 92001 Nanterre, France.

E-mail address: constantina.badea@u-paris10.fr (C. Badea).

context-specific, and that group homogeneity may carry a positive meaning under certain circumstances.

The variability and significance of group homogeneity judgments

Recent research has shown that a group's winning performance may be associated with higher within-group similarity (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Murnighan & Conlon, 1991; Simons, Pelled, & Smith, 1999). For example, Murnighan and Conlon (1991) showed that the members of more successful classical music quartets have a greater tendency to be unanimous in their opinions about their music repertoire. They also saw their fellow group members as very similar "in all the important ways" with respect to music. More recently, Rubin and Badea (2010) examined the homogeneity judgments of a group of fashion designers who were presented as either winners or losers of a fashion competition. Participants perceived winners to be more homogenous than losers on positive traits and less homogeneous on negative traits. This effect was fully mediated by the extent to which the two groups were believed to possess the trait under consideration. In other words, judgments of group variability were determined by the participants' heuristic that "homogeneity equals possession of traits" (see also Rubin & Badea, 2007). Winning groups were rated as being more homogeneous on positive traits (e.g., creative, hardworking) because they were perceived to possess these traits to a greater extent than losing groups. Finally, Simon and Brown's (1987) research supports the idea that the perception of in-group homogeneity increases the 'groupness' of the in-group relative to the out-group and highlights the superiority of the in-group vis-à-vis the social support and solidarity that it offers its members.

Taken together, this line of research suggests that judgments of group homogeneity are sensitive to factors other than the knowledge of social hierarchies or objective variability. In particular, group homogeneity judgments appear to be influenced by the *meaning* of group homogeneity within specific contexts (Voci, 2000). It should be noted, however, that in the studies reported above, the positive connotations of group homogeneity may have been due to objective differences in variability rather than a subjective perceptual bias. The aim of the present research was to investigate the possibility of a genuine perceptual bias in which people perceive positive groups to be more homogeneous than negative groups regardless of their actual, objective level of group homogeneity.

It is important to investigate the way in which context influences biased perceptions of group variability for both theoretical and practical reasons. From a theoretical perspective, the influence of context has always been underestimated in the area of perceived group variability. Indeed, researchers initially focused on the out-group homogeneity effect (for a review, see Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992) before identifying moderators in the social context that produced an in-group homogeneity effect (e.g., Simon & Pettigrew, 1990). The present research aimed to contribute toward a deeper appreciation of the effects of context on biased perceptions of group variability. From a practical perspective, the present research will lead to a better understanding of stereotyping in general and, consequently, more effective approaches in addressing negative stereotypes and associated prejudice.

Group performance and group homogeneity

In the present research, we examined the perception of group homogeneity in the context of group performance during an intergroup competition. We assumed that group homogeneity can be seen as a positive quality in this context because it is related to cohesiveness, and cohesiveness is related to better group performance.

There are a variety of reasons why winning groups should be seen as more homogeneous in the context of an intergroup competition. First, although group status (high/low) may be negatively related to group homogeneity, group performance (winning/losing) is conceptually

distinct from group status and, consequently, has a different relation with group homogeneity. In particular, group status is a relatively stable characteristic that is related to historical intergroup conflicts and legitimized by ideologies and social beliefs (Jost & Banaji, 1994). In contrast, group performance in an intergroup competition is a more dynamic characteristic that may vary considerably across time and according to the nature of the competition. So, for example, while both high status and winning are positively valued, the status conferred by winning depends on the nature of the competition. For example, winning a cake eating contest might not necessarily confer high status.¹

Second, winning groups are perceived to be more cohesive than losing groups, and cohesiveness is associated with greater homogeneity. Generally, cohesiveness is inferred from the number and strength of mutual positive attitudes among members of a group (Taylor, Doria, & Tyler, 1983). Most theorists assume that cohesiveness and group performance influence each other mutually (Farris & Lim, 1969; Turner, Hogg, Turner, & Smith, 1984). However, in a meta-analytic integration of the relation between group cohesiveness and performance, Mullen and Copper (1994) showed that the most direct effect is likely to be from performance to cohesiveness rather than from cohesiveness to performance (see also Fullagar & Egleston, 2008). Hence, group performance has the potential to affect perceived group cohesiveness.

Cohesiveness and homogeneity are two related aspects of the perception of social groups. Some research showed that the greater commitment of the members of work groups (Riordan & Shore, 1997; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992) and greater cohesion (O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989) lead to increased perceptions of homogeneity. These studies suggest that winners might be perceived as being more cohesive than losers and, consequently, more homogenous.

Experiment 1

The aim of our research was to show that a group's successful performance may cause observers to perceive it as relatively homogeneous because, in an intergroup competition, group homogeneity has a positive connotation that is associated with group cohesiveness. In our first experiment, participants learned about members of a fashion designer group that was presented as having either won or lost a fashion competition. Participants read the opinions that the group members had ostensibly given after the competition, and these opinions were either very similar or very different. Hence, we experimentally manipulated group performance and objective variability independently from one another. We predicted that winners would be perceived as being more homogenous than losers regardless of their objective variability.

Method

Participants and design

We used a 3 (group performance: winners vs. losers vs. control) \times 3 (objective homogeneity: positive homogeneity vs. negative homogeneity vs. heterogeneity) between-subjects design. We included positive and negative homogeneity conditions in order to make sure that the effects were not driven by the valence of the homogeneity.

We recruited 175 French first-year psychology undergraduate students (15 men, 160 women) from Lille 3 University, France. Participants were aged 17 to 34 years old ($M = 19.54$). A female experimenter conducted the experiment across 15 sessions, each containing between 10 and 15 participants.

¹ Note that group identification and the value attributed to the competition may moderate the extent to which winning is related to group status. Hence, to return to our example of a cake-eating competition, winning may be positively related to group status among professional cake-eaters and, consequently, winning may cause perceptions of high in-group homogeneity for this group.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/948043>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/948043>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)