Influence of Context on Impression Formation

Zoe Weinstein
Abigail Scholer
E. Tory Higgins
What is impression formation anyway?

- A motivated task
  - Accuracy
  - Maintain previous assumptions
- Influenced by context
Outcome Dependency

- Your outcomes are influenced by another’s behavior
  - Operationalized by ability to receive a reward
- Outcome dependency influences how participants attend to information about a target
- When dependent, more attention to:
  - Stereotype-inconsistent vs. stereotype-consistent information (Fiske and Von Hendy 1992, Bogart et al, 1999)
  - individuating vs. group information (Neuberg and Fiske 1987)
Building on this work:

- What individuating information specifically are people attending to?
  - Big 5: conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, emotional stability, openness
  - Variability based on context
Building on this work:

- Does interest in info relate to outcome dependency?
- To group membership of target?
  - Often work with out-group member (sorority member, heart patient, schizophrenic) (Neuberg and Fiske 1987, Bogart et al. 1999)
  - What are the effects of working with an in-group member?
Exploring New Territory, Finding a Framework

- People As Resources
  - Model developed by Scholer and Higgins (2005)
  - Proposes some major motivations behind impression formation
PAR’s 3 Big Questions:

- What resources does this person have?
- Are these resources important to me?
  - Context
- Will this person use these resources for me or against me?
  - Is this a warm person?
Design

- All Ps CC females (n=84)
- 2 x 2 (dependency and group)
  - Outcome dependent or independent of target
  - Target part of in-group (CC) or out-group (BC)
- Target ineligible for reward, and target does not exist
Circle the picture below which best describes your relationship with Columbia College (C.C.)

1. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

2. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

3. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

4. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

5. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

6. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

7. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

8. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

9. 
   - Self
   - C.C.

10. 
    - Self
    - C.C.

11. 
    - Self
    - C.C.

12. 
    - Self
    - C.C.
Do Columbia College students feel close to each other?

- Pilot data shows that on a 12-point scale the mean rating for CC females’ relationship with CC is a 7 (Aron & Aron 1986)
Do CC students feel close to Barnard students?

- Mean rank of CC and BC is 3
Procedure

Joint task: creative project

Personality Q

Group membership

Dependency

Want to see? Expectations?

View target Q

Reading times
DVs

- What did they say they wanted to see?
  - Desire to See Index: how helpful, important, relevant, much Ps would like to see each piece of info

- What did they look at?
  - How outcome-dependency and social group influence these processes?
PAR’s Predictions

- Most attention to task-relevant information
  - Agreeableness
    - Collaborative work
  - Conscientiousness
    - reliability
  - Openness
    - creativity

- Increased attention when:
  - Outcome dependent
  - W/ out-group
  - In-group?
## Desire to See Index

### Main Effect of Trait

#### Index of Desire to See

(Avg. of Like to See, Helpful, Impt, & Relevance)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Index Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stability</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<.001, F (4,77)= 35
Desire to See Information: Group X Dependency

TARGET GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Barnard Columbia
7.1 7.0 6.9 6.8 6.7 6.6 6.5 6.4

OUTCOME DEPENDENCY

independent dependent

P = .127, F (1,80) = 2.4
How Task Relevant is this information?

![Bar chart showing outcome dependence for Columbia and Barnard]

**Outcome Dependence**
- Independent
- Dependent

**Target Group Membership**

- Columbia: 7.0
- Barnard: 6.7

**Significance**

P = .04, F(1, 80) = 4.4
Desire to See: Conscientiousness

P = .01, F(1, 80) = 6.7
Desire to See: Agreeableness

P = .126 F(1,80) = 2.4
Agreeableness Importance moderated by: Group x Dependency

\[ P = 0.04, F(1, 80) = 4.3 \]
What do participants actually look at?

P<.001, F(4,76)=11.5
Any Interactions between looking time and particular traits?

- No significant effects for Openness, Emotional Stability, and Conscientiousness
  - Conscientiousness - too task-relevant to be ignored?
- Effects for agreeableness and extraversion
Agreeableness Looking time:
Group X Dependency

TARGET GROUP MEMBERSHIP
Barnard
Columbia

Mean Reading Time (seconds)
17
16
15
14
13
12
11
10

OUTCOME DEPENDENCY
independent
dependent

P=.04, F(1,76)=4.4
Importance of Agreeableness

TARGET GROUP MEMBERSHIP

OUTCOME DEPENDENCY

$P = .04, F(1, 80) = 4.3$
Agreeableness Looking time: Group X Dependency

P = .04, F(1, 76) = 4.4
Summary

- Ps did not attend to all traits equally
- Care most about Agreeableness when working with *out-group*
- Care most about Conscientiousness info when *dependent*
- For agreeableness, disconnect between what Ps report they want to see and what they look at
Future Questions

● What are the different motivations at play in this social situation?
  ○ Accuracy vs. defensive?

● Further explore the implications of working with an in-group member
  ○ Other salient in-groups show same difference between desire to see and actual looking time?
    ○ More or less salient
    ○ More or less part of Ps self-identity
Thanks!
Higgins Lab
Students of the Honors Seminar