Design for "Conformity to descriptive norms" experiment

Background

The field of social psychology investigates the question of how other people's opinions affect our own decision making. In this experiment we examine the role of two theories that emerged from this line of research. One is the descriptive norm effect according to which people simply tend to make the decision that is most popular (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020). The other is the self-categorization theory (Turner & Reynolds, 2012) which states that an individual's decisions are affected by identification with a social group (ingroup) and segregation from other social groups (outgroups) (Ingroup outgroup, n.d.). In particular, it states that an individual tends to make the same decision as the majority of its ingroup while avoiding making the decision the majority of the outgroup made.

To investigate these two effects, we first identify each participant's in- and outgroup before presenting the participants with a moral dilemma situation for which they have to make a decision. Before making that decision, half of the participants are informed on how their ingroup decided while the other subjects are additionally informed on how the outgroup decided.

According to the self-categorization theory the proportion of people who made the same decision as their ingroup should be higher in the group that was shown information on both in- and outgroup. Just following the descriptive norm effect would suggest the opposite, so that the proportion of people who make the same decision as their ingroup should be higher among the participants who were only shown ingroup information.

This study is a replication of the paper by Pryor et al. (2019), by students enrolled in the German bachelors programm B.Sc. Cognitive Science in Osnabrück.

Hypotheses

We are here concerned with the self-categorization theory and the descriptive norm effect. In particular, we are going to compare two hypotheses that capture the different predictions about participant behaviour made by the two competing accounts. Those hypotheses are:

- **1. Main hypothesis (self-categorization theory):** Participants will conform more to the ingroup descriptive norm when an opposing outgroup descriptive norm is shown (Self-categorization theory).
- **2. Alternative hypothesis (descriptive norm effect):** People will conform to the overall descriptive norm, such that conformity with the ingroup descriptive norm will decrease when an opposing outgroup descriptive norm is presented.

The goal of this study is to investigate which hypothesis better predicts our data. As the self-categorization theory builds up on the descriptive norm effect by including additional effects and therefore can be seen as going beyond the descriptive norm effect, we regard the hypothesis of the self-categorization theory as our main hypothesis while the hypothesis of the descriptive norm effect is the alternative hypothesis.

We expect to find that our main hypothesis gives a better prediction of our data which would be the case if we find a Bayes Factor larger than 1 in favor of our main hypothesis over the alternative hypothesis. However, the strength of evidence a Bayes Factor poses depends on how large it is and therefore in order to have strong evidence in favor of our main hypothesis, we require a Bayes Factor of at least 10 in favor of our main hypothesis over the alternative hypothesis. More details about how we will compare the hypotheses and interpret our results can be found in the part 'Analysis Plan'.

Design

Materials:

We collect a set of eight social issues, which are currently relevant in Germany, to give the participants the option to choose a topic they are interested in. We define these by corresponding research and relevant articles (PMG Themenrennen, 2021; Bundestagswahl 2021, 2021).

A Likert scale with 11 points is used for the judgment of how much the participants agree or disagree with a specific statement corresponding to their chosen social issue.

We use two different moral dilemmata, meaning situations for which the following action is hard to decide. After confronting the participants with a moral dilemma we show either only an ingroup descriptive norm or an ingroup and outgroup descriptive norm, which give information about how the ingroup/the outgroup would decide. The dilemmata are presented below and the descriptive norms are explained in detail in the section "Procedure".

A 6-point scale is used for evaluating the decision of the participant regarding the dilemma. This will be described in more detail in the section "Procedure".

Towards the end of the experiment there will be an understanding check as additional trial using sentences provided in the research paper (Pryor et al., 2019, p. 4) translated into German as the whole study will be in German, as well as additional ones, to prove whether the participant has been attentively focused throughout the study.

The full set of the eight social issues and the dilemmata are shown below.

We used word-by-word translations in this document to be as precise as possible, where word-by-word translations could change the meaning of the sentence we used semantic translations.

Social issues factors:

The following statements and social issues are written in German as we will conduct the study in German:

1. Tempolimit

Statement: Es sollte eine Geschwindigkeitsbegrenzung auf deutschen Autobahnen eingeführt werden.

Speed limit

Statement: A speed limit should be introduced on German highways.

2. Digitalisierung und Datenschutz

Statement: Persönliche Daten des Verbrauchers sollten in Deutschland besser geschützt werden.

Data privacy

Statement: Personal data of consumers should be more protected in Germany.

3. Gender-Debatte

Statement: In der Öffentlichkeit sollte Sprache gegendert sein.

Gender debate

Statement: The language used in public should be gendered.

4. Impfpflicht

Statement: Falls auf freiwilliger Basis keine Herdenimmunität erreicht werden kann, sollte eine Impfpflicht eingeführt werden.

Compulsory vaccination

Statement: If herd immunity cannot be achieved on a voluntary basis, compulsory vaccination should be introduced.

5. Migration

Statement: Migration nach Deutschland sollte strenger kontrolliert werden.

Migration

Statement: Migration to Germany should be more strictly controlled.

6. Vermögenssteuer

Statement: Die Vermögenssteuer sollte in Deutschland wieder eingeführt werden.

Wealth tax

Statement: The wealth tax should be reintroduced in Germany.

7. Cannabis Legalisierung

Statement: Das Konsumieren von Cannabis sollte ab einem Alter von 18 Jahren in Deutschland legal sein.

Cannabis legalization

Statement: Consuming cannabis should be legal in Germany, from the age of 18.

8. Fleischkonsum

Statement: Fleisch sollte in Deutschland einen Mindestpreis erhalten.

Meat consumption

Statement: Meat should have a minimum price in Germany.

Experimental trial (dilemmata):

In the following the two dilemmata that we used are presented.

Alltagsbezogenes Dilemma:

Ein*e gute*r Freund*in erzählt dir, dass er/sie ein Verbrechen begangen und deshalb nachts Probleme mit dem Schlafen hat. Er/Sie hat das Gefühl, dass du der/die Einzige bist, dem/der er/sie seine/ihre Tat anvertrauen kann, und erzählt dir von dem Verbrechen. Ein paar Tage später liest du in der Zeitung, dass jemand Unschuldiges für das Verbrechen deines/deiner Freundes/Freundin verhaftet wurde.

Was tust du?

- Zur Polizei gehen und ihnen sagen, was du weißt.
- Nichts sagen, weil du das Vertrauen eines Freundes nicht verraten willst.

More daily dilemma:

Your friend tells you that they committed a crime. They explain that they have trouble sleeping at night and feel that you are the only one they can trust with their confession. A few days later, you read in the newspaper that someone innocent has been arrested for your friend's crime.

What do you do?

- Go to the police and tell them what you know.
- Say nothing because you don't want to betray a friend's confidence.

<u>Philosophisches Dilemma</u>: (Trolley-dilemma)

Fassung von Foot (1967)

Eine Straßenbahn ist außer Kontrolle geraten und droht, fünf Personen zu überrollen. Durch Umstellen einer Weiche kann die Straßenbahn auf ein anderes Gleis umgeleitet werden. Unglücklicherweise befindet sich dort eine weitere Person.

Was tust du? ("Trolley-Problem", 2021, para. 1)

- Die Weiche umstellen, sodass der Zug auf das andere Gleis geleitet wird und eine Person überfahren wird.
- Nichts machen, sodass der Zug gerade weiter fährt und fünf Personen überfahren werden.

As the trolley-dilemma is popular and therefore translated into several languages, we used the official German and English version as published on wikipedia.

Philosophical dilemma:

There is a runaway trolley barreling down the railway tracks. Ahead, on the tracks, there are five people tied up and unable to move. The trolley is headed straight for them. You are standing some distance off in the train yard, next to a lever. If you pull this lever, the trolley will switch to a different set of tracks. However, you notice that there is one person on the side track. ("Trolley problem", 2021, para. 1)

There are two options:

- Pull the lever, diverting the trolley onto the side track where it will kill one person.
- Do nothing and allow the trolley to kill the five people on the main track.

What do you do?

Procedure

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Basic demographic information retrieval about age and sex
- 3. Instruction for Dilemma-study, with the background story
- 4. Topic selection: social issue they care most about
- 5. Statement about their chosen issue and reporting the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from -5 (= Strongly Disagree) to +5 (= Strongly Agree).
- 6. Further Instructions
- 7. Displaying the first dilemma
- 8. Experimental trials:

Participants get ingroup/outgroup information in addition to the first dilemma

- either information only about the ingroup decision
- or information about both the ingroup and outgroup decision
- 9. Participants indicate how they would respond to the moral dilemma on a 6-point Likert scale
- 10. Participants are asked to rate how good or bad they felt about their chosen action (these responses are not analysed)
- 11. Displaying the second dilemma
- 12. Experimental trials:

Participants get ingroup/outgroup information in addition to the second dilemma

- either information only about the ingroup decision
- or information about both the ingroup and outgroup decision
- 13. Participants indicate how they would respond to the moral dilemma on a 6-point Likert scale
- 14. Participants are asked to rate how good or bad they felt about their chosen action (these responses are not analysed)
- 15. Understanding check
- 16. Identity Check: single-item social identification measure with a 7-point scale

First, participants are welcomed to the study and after providing basic demographic information about age and sex, participants are presented with instructions for the current study. They get the information that this study was following on from a previous study that investigated how people feel during a moral dilemma. After that, participants are asked to select which out of eight social issues they cared about the most. Subsequently, participants are presented with a statement about their chosen issue and are asked to report to which extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement on an 11-point Likert scale. Based on their decision to which extend they (dis-)agree with that statement, the ingroup and the outgroup of the participant is defined. The specific ingroup of one participant are hereby people, who have the same opinion on the specific social issue, whereas the outgroup is defined by people, who disagree on this specific topic with the participant. The participants are then presented with two moral dilemmata. One dilemma is philosophical, while the other one describes a more daily situation. The order in which the dilemmata are presented is randomly selected. After each moral dilemma, all participants are presented with an ingroup descriptive norm informing them that 60% of previous participants who had agreed with them

about their chosen social issue (i.e. members of their political ingroup) chose to act in a certain way. Which of the two options their ingroup chose (f. e. philosophical dilemma: option A: pull the lever, option B: do nothing), is randomly selected (50%) for the between-subject design. Additionally, only half of the participants are also told that, in the previous study, 85% of participants that disagreed with them on that social issue chose the other option. Half of the participants are therefore only presented with their descriptive ingroup norm (condition 1), whereas the remaining participants are presented with the descriptive ingroup and outgroup norm (condition 2). A between-subject design is used since the participants are presented with one of the two conditions. After that, participants are told to indicate how they would respond to the moral dilemma on a 6-point Likert scale. To fit with the backstory presented in the instructions, participants are then also asked to rate how good or bad they felt about their chosen action (rating choice), although these responses are not analysed. In order to ensure that participants were paying attention, an understanding check provided by three trials is included asking participants which statements about the current study are true. (f. e, option A: "Du musstest immer so schnell wie möglich antworten." - "You always had to answer as soon as possible.", option B: "Es ist irrelevant, wie lange du für deine Antworten benötigt hast." - "The time it took you to answer is irrelevant." (correct). In the end, participants are asked on a 6-point Likert scale to which extent they identify (or not identify) with their specific ingroup or outgroup (Identity Check: f. e. "Ich identifiziere mich als Tempolimit-Befürworter" - "I identify myself as a speed limit advocate" und "Ich identifiziere mich als Tempolimit-Gegner" - "I identify myself as a speed limit opponent")

Implementation:

The introduction slide with the first informations to the study and the basic demographic information retrieval about age and sex:







View for selecting the social issue they care most about and then the statement about their chosen issue and to report the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement:



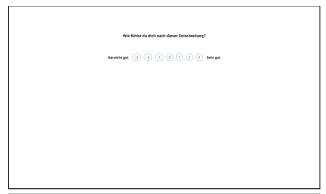


Instructions and dilemma situation:











Inderstanding check:	
Weiche dieser Behauptungen über dieses Experiment ist wahr? Für die Durchführung dieses Experiments erhältet du eine Aufwandsenschallsgung oder VP Standen. Wir können dir lieder keine Aufwandsenschälligung oder VP Stunden anbieten, sind dir aber sehr dankbaur.	Welche dieser Behauptungen über dieses Experiment ist wahr? Anfangs wurden dir mehrere Themen zur Auswahl gestellt. Die konntest dir ein Dilemma aussuchen.
Welche dieser Behauptungen über dieses Experiment ist wahr? Du musstest immer so schnell wie möglich antworten,	
Es ist irrelevant, wie lange du für deine Antworten bendügt hast.	
dentity Check:	
Abschlussbefragung	Abschlussbefragung
Bitze bewerte, wie sehr die folgenden Aussagen auf dich zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen:	Bitte bewerte, wie sehr die folgenden Aussagen auf dich zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen:
Ich identifiziere mich als Implifiiche Befürworter: Inkarrekt ③ ② ① ① ① ① ② ③ Kerrekt	Ich identificiere mich als Implificht-Gegner. Intervekt ③ ② ④ ⑥ ① ② ③ Kornekt
Descripted 3 3 5 0 0 0 0 0 mercest	insurrent (3) (2) (1) (1) (2) (3) surrent
Thank you for taking part in this experiment!	

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