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Article Critique #3

**Summary of Article**

1. Problem/Purpose: What was being studied in this experiment is the phenomenon of social loafing, which is when people put less effort in something when they are in a group then when they’re working alone. This could be because of a multitude of reasons but is mostly when they’re involvement can’t be determined so there’s no threat of being blamed for performing bad or praised for performing well. This study aimed to determine which specific factors may inhibit social loafing or encourage it. This study is important due to how there was yet to be any research on the specific scenarios and situations they tested, making the results beneficial for bettering understanding this topic. The researchers hope to narrow down when social loafing will be less prominent, when there was a factor of identifiability or a factor of evaluation.
2. Key Hypotheses: The researchers believed that loafing could be eliminated if the participant’s responses could be easily identified as there’s and if those responses could be compared with those of the other participants, causing a factor of evaluation. This study is based on research by Latané et. al (1979), Ingham et. al (1974), Petty et. al (1980), Kerr et. al (1981). This research is grounded in and based heavily on the theory of social loafing, as it is what the study aims to understand better.
3. Sample: The participants consisted of 160 males and female undergraduate students in an introductory psychology course. This is not a very generalizable sample as there is a narrow age range of participants, as well as limited demographics.
4. Measures and Procedures: The independent variable is which of the four groups (identified and compared, identified and not compared, group and compared, group and not compared) the participant is in. The dependent variable is the extent to which the participant participated in social loafing. The study was conducted by putting each participant in groups of 4 and seated in which they were partitioned from the other group members. Depending in what condition the participant was in, they read certain information about what the activity would be that is in line with whether they should think they’re answers are identifiable or not. For the factor of comparability, the participants were told they had the same objects or not as the other group members, but in reality, they all had the same object, which was a knife. The activity was of thinking of as many uses as possible for a certain object. First, the participants “chose” their object from an envelope, memorize their object, then fold the paper three times, and slide it down a tube in front of them that extended into a box. The participants were shown if the box was split into compartments or not. When it came to writing down the uses, they wore headphones where music was playing so they couldn’t hear how the other group members were doing. Each slip of paper has only one use written on it and is then folded and put in the tube. The processes of writing down uses took 12 minutes. They then asked a set of questions that worked as manipulation checks for both identifiability and comparability, which basically measured how much the participant felt their answers could be identified and compared. Each participant was given exactly 100 slips of paper, meaning the experimenters were able to determine how many uses each person thought of, no matter if the box has partitions or not.
5. Results: The results were aligned with the hypothesis, determining that if a participant felt they could be identified among the different answers and could be compared to the others (have the same object) then they managed to come up with more uses. There was a similar number of uses produced among the identified/not compares, group/compared, and group/not compared. This shows that in order to fight against social loafing, a person must feel that their contribution to a group task can be easily identified as well as feel they could/are being compared to the other members of the group.
6. Practical Application: These findings can be best applied in work spheres, as different factors can be altered in order to produce the most ideal atmosphere to fight against social loafing and therefore boost productivity in the workspace. Additionally, this can be applied to school, as class participation can also be boosted.

**Personal Reaction**

I believe the results of this study are very interesting and provide important ways of thinking of participation. Being able to trace how the psychology of participation works makes it possible to better understand certain scenarios and situations. I believe this research study was constructed very well as it was able to prevent confounding factors that may have had to be taken into account when discussing the results. I would have also liked to include different age groups of people from different cultures, to make the results more generalizable.

What was determined in this study makes it possible for me to better understand my unconscious reasonings for why I do certain things, in different spheres of my life. Specifically, what may determine the effort I exert and how important I may think something is. This study provides clarifying information on this topic, as it delved into specific factors that may be important for understanding social loafing.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What if this experiment was performed in a country with a culture completely different than the US, such as in Asia or the Middle East? Would we see more effort exerted even if there is no comparison or possibility of being identified?
2. What if the participants were given a different task to do, at the same difficulty level as the one performed in this study, such as a short test on basic concepts, or an easy memorization test?