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RESEARCH REPORT

Effect of Intergroup Differentiation on Participation With Religious Young People

Josué Tinoco

*Department of Social Psychology
Metropolitan University, Mexico*

Social Categorization Theory (Tajfel, 1972) tries to explain processes in which social facts are perceived (such as behaviors, information, data, etc.) as structured into specific categories, allowing people to explain why such facts take place and to take a position toward them. Such categories let people structure the world in a determined way. Some studies have been made about the effect of belonging to a religion in an intergroup behavior (Ng & Wilson, 1989; Rokeach, 1973; Wilder, 1984), but not in a Mexican environment, nor with religious groups. A survey was made with 4 religious groups (Baptists, Catholics, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Pentecostals), evaluating the religious degree, the perceived similarities with the outgroup, and the intention of intergroup participation. Results indicate a phenomenon of ingroup bias took place. They showed a significant relation between perceived similarities and the intention to participate with the outgroup. Although there were religious differences, groups such as the Baptists and the Pentecostals showed similarities; Catholics and Mormons also showed similarities. Finally, the research shows the importance of intergroup relations as long as they take place in a society. They are a key factor to psychosocial understanding of cultural phenomena.

Social relationships are created and structured based on individual and group interactions. Based on these interactions, each individual makes up and rebuilds

his world, interprets it, and reinterprets it. Individual perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs are directly related with the groups with which they interact,¹ the so-called reference and belonging groups. As part of norms acquisition and the socialization process, each individual apprehends behavior rules, the values that guide the conduct of all in the group. The Social Categorization Theory tries to explain this phenomenon.

Categorization is understood as the ordering into category terms (e.g., groups of people, objects, or facts).² Its function is to systematize the surroundings, which would simplify information received from those surroundings. It is a process through which differences among objects are minimized, to reduce differences toward stimuli. Therefore, it is intended to simplify the surroundings and highlight the similarities and differences of the elements.

Through the Intergroup Differentiation and Categorization Process, the appearance and definition of an individual's place in the social group or society is generated. The categorization goal in such studies is to discern in an individual's behavior the effects of pertaining to a certain group. It is assumed that the fact of pertaining to a given group will affect an individual's behavior, both in front of that group and in front of others. Those individuals who are conscious about being part of the interacting ingroup clearly visualize other individuals as members of the outgroup (Wilder, 1978).

When individuals interact, they behave as members of a clearly different and defined social category. This has been known as the "Minimal Group Paradigm" (Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971; Turner, 1978), which divides individuals into different groups or categories based on a trivial criteria (one's choice, or randomly assigned). In these groups, there is no link between the individual and the group. There is no history. There are no common goals, nor is any kind of social interaction allowed. The main result of this categorization is that individuals discriminate favoring the ingroup and are contrary to the outgroup. They do show more positive attitudes in comparison with the ingroup.

As a consequence of the categorization, the phenomenon of "Homogeneity Perception" is presented. Its function is to exaggerate the outgroup characteristics to differentiate the outgroup from the ingroup. Nonetheless, the outgroup characteristics also are exaggerated to provoke a polarization among the groups to perceive them as more different than they really are. As a consequence, the individual characteristics are not as important as those pertaining to a group. This means that just because one belongs to a group, the individual will share a positive or negative set of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors with that group. It is in this sense

¹"Social psychology of the intergroup relations is related to the intergroup behavior and the attitudes" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 3).

²*Social categorization* could be defined as a cognitive representation in the social division of groups (Turner, 1990). The categorization function for Tajfel (1972) consisted in grouping objects, people, or facts in such a way that they were equivalent in themselves.

that people assume that members of the ingroup have similar beliefs to them, and members of the outgroup have different ones (Roccas & Schwartz, 1993; Rokeach, Smith, & Evans, 1960).

Many of the group rejecting situations are a result of stereotyping the outgroup (Rokeach, 1960).

So it is possible to talk about nonacceptance or religious intolerance, about rejecting those who do not think the same as us. Because a person belongs to a different group (outgroup), the ingroup behaves toward him or her, without taking into consideration personal characteristics, just as it does with any members of that group, through Homogeneity Perception. These factors in the categorization process also have an effect in religious group categorization: "The intolerance problem leads us to another interesting distinction: that one of ingroup and outgroup" (Rokeach, 1960, p. 9).

When we do refer to Christian religious groups, some common images recur. They include the Good Samaritan and Christ's Crucifixion because of love for humans, but it seems those altruism examples do not always exist. Rokeach (1973) called this "religious beliefs paradoxes." It seems, according to his data, that those people who feel themselves a part of a religious institution (Catholics, Mormons, and so on) have more rejecting behaviors and nonacceptance toward ethnic and racial groups compared to those who are nonbelievers. There is a constant struggle to gain eternal life, to convince the rest that they should change their way of living.

One of the factors that affects the categorization process and intergroup differentiation is the similarity among the groups to be compared (Wilder, 1984). The similarity among groups—through common beliefs, for example—would reduce discrimination against members of the outgroup, because there would not be any possibility to categorize "in" or "out" groups. The perception of a strong similarity among groups could be a threat if it clouds the group's distinction, making it hard for individuals to delimit their differentiation and social identity. Similarly, the identification degree with the ingroup is related with intergroup similarities as well as group favoritism: If a person is not identified with the ingroup, the social identity will not be affected, therefore there would not be any threat to a similarity recognition with the outgroup.

PROBLEM

This research pretended to show the bias ingroup phenomenon, finding the relation between belonging to a group and participation, as well as the perceived similarity of the outgroups with the ingroup and willingness to participate with them.

A fictitious story (cover story) about education was created. The research was divided into two steps. The first gave information about religion and education. In the second step, individuals were asked to fill out a questionnaire about team participation with young people from different religious groups. This was called

“participation.” Beside it, the perceived similarity degree was ranked, to check if similarity perception would be related to a participation willingness.

Two hundred young people who go to churches belonging to Mexico City’s East Area participated (116 men and boys and 84 women and girls) ranging from 15 to 25 years old (average age 19.4). The religious groups who participated in the survey belonged to the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and the Pentecostal Church. The “Ingroup” term referred to the group to which each of the individuals belonged, and the “Outgroup” referred to the other groups.

RESULTS

The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test are presented with each one of the religious groups: Baptists, Catholics, Mormons, and Pentecostals.³

For young people from the Baptist Church, their willingness to participate with young people from each one of the churches was 3.85 for other Baptists, 2.48 for Catholics, 1.97 for Mormons, and 3.10 for Pentecostals. Baptists showed high willingness to participate with their own group, $F(3, 191) = 24.12, p < .0001$, and with Pentecostals.

For young people from the Catholic Church, willingness to participate with young people from each one of the churches was 2.15 for Baptists, 3.47 for other Catholics, 2.30 for Mormons, and 2.32 for Pentecostals. Catholics showed high willingness to participate with their own group, $F(3, 93) = 8.51, p < .0001$.

For young people from the Mormon Church, willingness to participate with young people from each one of the churches was 2.60 for Baptists, 2.64 for Catholics, 3.84 for other Mormons, and 2.66 for Pentecostals. Mormons showed preference to participate with people from their own group, $F(3, 187) = 33.87, p < .0001$.

For young people from the Pentecostal Church, willingness to participate with young people from each one of the churches was 2.60 for Baptists, 2.44 for Catholics, 2.02 for Mormons, and 3.52 for other Pentecostals. Pentecostals showed willingness to participate with people from their own group, $F(3, 189) = 10.45, p < .0001$.

PERCEIVED SIMILARITIES

Table 1 reports the results of young people’s perceived similarities with groups other than their own. As one would suspect, perceived similarity values were low (very little similarity), except for the young Baptists, who perceived the Pentecos-

³A questionnaire was given about group relations, religiousness, and perception among them. The responses ranged from 1 (nothing) to 4 (a lot)

TABLE 1
Perceived Similarities

<i>Young People</i>	<i>Similarity With Each Group</i>				<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Baptist</i>	<i>Pentecostal</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Mormon</i>	
Baptist	–	3.14	1.76	1.43	F(2, 143) $p < .003$
Pentecostal	2.48	–	1.21	1.21	F(2, 138) $p < .0001$
Catholic	1.84	1.86	–	1.95	F(2, 139) $p < .0001$
Mormon	1.88	1.91	1.95	–	F(2, 135) $p < .0001$

tal group as quite similar. Of course, the young Baptists still perceived that Baptists had more similarities with them than did any other group.

Catholics and Mormons perceive low similarity with all groups, but they do show similar averages in the reciprocal evaluations.

All this shows the “why” of the obtained scores about willingness to participate. When the outgroup is perceived as quite similar, the categorization does not receive such a big emphasis, leading to a possibility to deal with members of such outgroup. When there is a low similarity, the categorization is much more emphasized, and therefore there would be a low willingness to participate with members from the outgroup.

Individuals were also asked to score their own degree of religiosity, on a scale of 0 to 100. The one-way test was given to evaluate differences in the perceived religiousness. There were significant statistical differences, $F(3, 186) = 12.84$, $p < .0001$. Scores were 71.98 for Mormons, 66.50 for Baptists, 58.34 for Pentecostals, and 40.30 for Catholics.

There was no gender difference in any of the groups nor in the total of the sample, although averages belonging to women were higher than those from men.

Finally, some correlations to test the relation among willingness to participate, perceived similarity from each group, and religiousness were evaluated.

Baptist Young People

There were no significant relations among the three variables, although willingness to participate with Pentecostals and similarity with them showed significant differences compared to the rest of the situations.

Catholic Young People

Participation with Pentecostals is related with the similarity toward them ($r = .3828$, $p < .01$). Although having the lowest religiousness score of the four

groups, religiousness has direct relation with participation with Baptists ($r = .3867, p < .009$) as well as with Mormons ($r = .3478, p < .02$). It also has similarities with Baptists ($r = .4999, p < .001$), Pentecostals ($r = .3677, p < .011$) and Mormons ($r = .3478, p < .02$). As long as the religiousness degree was higher, there was more willingness to participate with the other groups, and there were also more similarities among them. That is probably why the religiousness level was the lowest.

Mormon Young People

Religiousness showed significant relation in a contrary way to the similarity with Catholics ($r = -.3347, p < .02$): less religiousness, more similarities. In any case, it was directly related with participation with each one of the other groups: Mormons ($r = .3632, p < .011$), Baptists ($r = .3131, p < .028$), Pentecostals ($r = .3117, p < .029$), and Catholics ($r = .3838, p < .007$).

There was no significant relation among similarity with the groups and participation with each one of them. Participants probably recognize and establish differences between them and other groups. For example, Mormons showed more religiousness than the rest of the groups, but less participation. This is reflected in Table 1.

Pentecostal Young People

Perceived similarity with Baptists was related with willingness to participate with such a group ($r = .7014, p < .001$). There was a link between willingness to participate Mormons and similarity toward them ($r = .3554, p < .014$). Religiousness was related in an opposite way with Baptists' similarities ($r = -.2914, p < .05$), and with the Catholics' similarities ($r = -.5955, p < .001$). That is, when there was less religiousness, there was a higher perceived similarity with such groups.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The instructions given in the invented situation were able to provoke the phenomenon of Intergroup Differentiation. The young people knew about the different groups' existence in the "beliefs" category. Instructions were intended to get the differentiation and verify the Ingroup Bias Phenomenon. That was proved with results from "Willingness to participate" in each group, where it was observed that the Bias Ingroup is there in all of the cases.

Similarity or Resemblance of two groups could impede the intergroup differentiation process, and would therefore cause it not to be shown in the "Willingness" category. This is important as long as an outgroup could be identified as similar with the ingroup. Categorization will be reduced, and the individual would

not feel her or his identity was threatened, as long as she or he is not dealing with someone they perceive to be an "Alien" to her or him, but someone similar.⁴

Morales (1994, p. 724–725) said certain conditions are required to create the intergroup discrimination phenomenon. One of those conditions is that there be no interaction between individuals or groups, and that there be anonymity.

In the Baptists' and Pentecostals' situation, categorization did appear, but they also exhibited the highest willingness to participate and recognize similarities. Similarity could have existed because Baptist young people from the visited areas had only been "converted" 1 to 5 years. Previously, most of them had belonged to Pentecostal families or had relatives there. As it was explained in a later interview with religious leaders, there was not a very sharp difference between the Pentecostal and Baptist religious groups.

The categorization process and the intergroup differentiation explained some of the behaviors the four religious groups share among them. The bias ingroup phenomenon was confirmed, as long as the young people preferred to participate in a second round with people belonging to their group. To participate with people having a different ideology was not that pleasant to most people, because the categorization process forced each individual to recognize differences with the rest as a way to structure and defend identity given by the group. A person who would prefer not to participate with people belonging to his group would hardly consider such a group as an important part of his life. It will not be a reference group for his identity. This cognitive element is related with the similarity perceived from that group. As long as there is less similarity, it would be harder for a group willing to participate with another, because their identity will be affected.

Similarity was not that related with religiousness, that is, in an interacting situation one's own perception about religiousness (the affective–cognitive involvement) was more important than was similarity with the groups. In these groups, it would seem the most important element in an interacting process was not the other's knowledge, but one's own concept, one's own "spiritual place" in the group. Nevertheless, a search for other variables—such as familial relationships, religious path, structure in a family, and socioeconomic level—would provide elements to define group relationships.

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⁴One's perception and willingness to participate could be related in a proportional contrary way to dogmatism: A dogmatic group will not tolerate participation with someone who does not belong to the in-group, and will not perceive the similarities with members from the outgroup. In this research such a dogmatism score was not included.

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