Me, You vs. the World:

The Role of Affiliative Motivation and Group Status on Social Tuning

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Introduction

The ability to get along with others is a vital part of our social lives. Past research has shown that the need to get along with others, known as affiliative motivation, can allow our attitudes to be swayed to align more with (or "tune" towards) the person or people we desire to associate with (Huntsinger, Lun, Sinclair & Clore, 2009; Sinclair, Lowery, Hardin & Colangelo, 2005). In addition to affiliative goals, research consistently shows that people prefer interacting with people who are similar to them, and that attitudes may also shift in order to fit into a social group (Simon, & Hamilton, 1994; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell 1987). The purpose of this research is to determine which of these two causes plays a larger role in social tuning, or the aligning of one's views towards their interaction partner. Are we more likely to tune solely when we feel the need to get along with someone, when we feel a connection due to group status (e.g., the person is part of our in-group), or is it a combination of both?

When looking at why people get along with one another, people seem motivated to develop a sense of mutual understand or shared reality. Shared reality theory suggests that developing a mutual understanding between oneself and an interaction partner is a key factor in developing and maintaining relationships. In particular, shared reality theory suggests that sometimes individuals may display social tuning to agree more with their interaction partner and promote mutual understanding. (Hardin & Higgins, 1996).

Research on social tuning consistently finds that affiliative motivation, or the desire to get along with another person, is a key factor in predicting when an individual will tune (Sinclair, Lowery, Hardin, & Colangelo, 2005; Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, & Hardin, 2005). For example, one study had participants complete an automatic attitude assessment about race after

an experimenter depicted pro or anti-egalitarian views. The result showed significant social tuning towards the experimenter's displayed attitude.

Research has also shown that social influences can lead to the subconscious imitation of others' attitudes and may even result in discrimination against others as well as ourselves (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994; Simon, & Hamilton, 1994). In this study, members belonging to a stigmatized social group, such as homosexuals, were more likely to self-stereotype themselves. The self-stereotyping was shown to increase with the size of the stigmatized group. Our social groups often dictate how we are expected to behave stereotypically, leading us to chose between fitting in with our peers or becoming a social pariah (Simon, & Hamilton, 1994).

Since past research has determined that both affiliative motivation and group status can lead to social tuning, it is important to determine which has more of an impact on social tuning. Many of the past experiments focused on tuning with strangers in groups, where as this experiment is looked at the effect of a single interaction partner who the participant is told they will be working with in the future.

Method

Participants

A total of 76 participants (26 females and 50 males) were recruited to participate and received experimental credit in a psychology class for their participation. 13 participants' data were not used (6 people did not recognize their partner as biased against overweight individuals, 3 people were able to guess the hypothesis, 1 person did not believe there was a partner, and 2 had outlying responses); thus, the results are based on 63 participants. All participants gave informed consent.

Design

Using a 2 x 2 design, the experiment investigated the effects of affiliative motivation and group status on social tuning. To manipulate affiliative motivation, the length of time the participants were told they would interact with a partner varied, either 5 (low affiliative motivation) or 30 minutes (high affiliative motivation). To manipulate group status, participants were told their partner was part of their in-group by being a WPI student (a student at the same school), or their out-group by being a Holy Cross student (a student a different school in the same town).

Participants always learned that their partner held more stereotypic attitudes towards overweight individuals than the average student. To measure the influence of affiliative motivation and group status on attitudes, we measured participants' explicit and implicit attitudes towards overweight individuals. Implicit attitudes were measured using the Implicit Associations Test towards overweight individuals (IAT, Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz, 1998), and explicit attitudes were measured with Crandall's Anti-Fat Attitudes Scale (1994).

Materials

Need for Closure. All participants began by completing a Need for Closure survey, while they were told their partners were completing a Body Issues survey. The survey consisted of 17 questions on a 6 point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree).

Implicit Body Attitudes Measure. A computerized IAT measuring associations towards overweight individuals was used (Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz, 1998). In this test, participants view items in the middle of the screen and have to categorize them, as quickly as possible, based on the attribute they best represent. For this version of the IAT, participants categorized "pleasant" or "unpleasant" words (e.g., Vomit or Rotten) and pictures of overweight or normal weight people (all materials used in this IAT were taken from Nosek, et al., 2007). To make the categorizations, participants press a key on the left-hand side of the computer (e.g., the "d" key) for the attribute that appears on the left-top corner of the screen (e.g., "overweight"), and they press a key on the right-hand side of the computer (e.g. the "k" key) for the attribute that appears on the right-top corner of the screen (e.g. "normal weight").

In this test, participants first complete a practice round to get used to the attribute-pairings task for each round. After the practice trial, participants are notified on the computer screen that the real trials have begun. First, participants complete trials where they categorize one attribute-pair at a time (e.g, pleasant/unpleasant). Then, they complete trials where they have to categorize both the attribute-pairs at the same time (e.g. pleasant/unpleasant and overweight/normal weight). In this case, left-hand key represents two categories (e.g., overweight and unpleasant), and the right-hand key represents the two categories (e.g., normal weight and pleasant). Participants then repeat this entire process, but the assignment for the attribute pairs switches (i.e., the left-hand key now represents overweight and pleasant). The

IAT counterbalances the pairs for each participant, such that not every participant would see same pairings first. The reaction times of the categorizations are recorded and are used to compute the strength of the association between the different pairings (see Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003 for the scoring algorithm of the IAT).

Attitudes Towards Overweight Individuals. To measure participant's explicit views towards overweight people, Crandall's (1994) Anti-fat Attitudes Scale was used.   This scale consists of 10 questions that measure overall attitudes towards the overweight, and includes questions that assess three constructs: dislike (e.g. " I don't have many friends that are fat."), willpower (e.g. " Fat people tend to be fat pretty much through their own fault.") and fear (e.g. " I worry about becoming fat."). The responses were measured on a 5 point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). See Appendix B for this survey.

Manipulation Check and Demographic Survey. The final survey was comprised of questions assessing participant's self reported affiliative motivation with their partner (e.g., "How much do you think you will like your partner?") and their sense of community with their school (e.g., "In general, I'm glad to be a member of the WPI community.").   In addition, we assessed how accurately the participant recalled information they learned about their partner (e.g., "What assessment did your partner complete?"). All responses were measured on a 7 point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much). Participants also provided demographic information (e.g. gender).

Procedure

After providing informed consent, the experimenter informed the participants that the study investigated the way strangers with miss-matched pieces of information interacted, and that to do so they would be completing a series of tasks and that they would also work with a

partner on a resource allocation task. Half the participants were told that their partner was from

their same school (in-group), and the remaining participants were informed that their partner was

from a different school (out-group).

In order to manipulate affiliative motivation, half the participants were informed that they

would be working with their partner for thirty minutes and that it would be important to

cooperate (high affiliative motivation), and the remaining half were told that they would work

with their partners for five minutes and there was no mention of a needing to work cooperatively

(low affiliative motivation). Participants were then brought to a computer that they thought

would be communicating with their partner. Participants were informed that the computer would

randomly assign them to complete a scale. All participants completed the Need for Closure

survey (Kruglanski, Webster & Klem, 1993).

After completing the scale, participants were told their score would be sent to their

partner and they would see which scale their partner completed and their results. Participants

were always told their partner completed a Body Attitudes Scale, and participants always learned

that their partner (whether an in-group or out-group member) was more prejudiced towards

overweight individuals than the average student from their school (both numbers were fabricated

for the experiment). Participant then completed an Implicit Associations Test (Greenwald,

McGhee & Schwartz, 1998) that measured their implicit attitudes towards overweight

individuals. Upon completion of the IAT, participants completed Crandall's (1994) Anti-fat

Attitudes Scale that measured their explicit views on overweight individuals, and completed a

follow-up questionnaire that assessed participants' attitudes towards their community, attitudes

towards the partner, self-reported affiliative motivation, and demographic information (e.g.,

gender). After completing the scales, participants were debriefed and thanked for their

participation.

Results

  To examine the effects of affiliative motivation and group membership on social tuning, analyses used a 2 (affiliative motivation: high vs. low) x 2 (group membership: in-group vs. out-group) ANOVA. Since all participants learned that their partner held more stereotypic views of overweight individuals than other students at their school, more stereotypic attitudes indicate more tuning with the interaction partner and more egalitarian attitudes indicate more tuning with the larger social group. It was found that significant tuning did occur for both implicit and explicit attitudes.

Implicit Attitudes

  Looking at implicit attitudes, higher negative numbers (i.e., -1, -2) indicate more stereotypic attitudes towards overweight individuals and higher positive numbers indicate more egalitarian attitudes towards overweight individuals. There were no main effects for affiliative motivation ($p = .4$) or group membership ($p = .8$). But, as predicted, there was a significant interaction between affiliative motivation and group membership on implicit attitudes, $F (1, 66) = 4.48$, $p = .04$. As predicted looking at how those with high affiliative motivation reacted, those who learned their partner was part of their in-group ($M = -.87$, $SD = .31$) tuned more towards the prejudiced attitudes of their interaction partner than those who learned their partner was part of the out-group ($M = -.63$; $SD = .42$), $F (1, 66) = 2.86$, $p = .05$, one-tailed test. Likewise, when participants learned their partner was a member of their in-group, those with high affiliative motivation ($M = -.87$, $SD = .31$) tuned more towards the prejudiced attitudes of their interaction partner than those with low affiliative motivation ($M = -.57$, $SD = .54$), $F (1, 66) = 4.2$, $p = .02$, one-tailed test. However, those who learned their partner was a member of their out-group showed no significant tuning regardless of the level of affiliative motivation, $F (1, 66) = .83$, $p =$

.2, one-tailed test. However, those with low affiliative motivation showed no tuning regardless of group membership, F (1, 66) = 1.68, p = .1, one-tailed test.

Explicit Attitudes

For the explicit scales, higher positive numbers (i.e., 1, 2) indicate more stereotypic attitudes towards overweight individuals and higher negative numbers indicate more egalitarian attitudes towards overweight individuals. Once again, there was no main effect found for affiliative motivation, p = .96. However, explicitly, significant social tuning occurred for group membership F (1, 60) = 5.08 p = .03. Participants paired with in-group partners (M = 1.77, SD = .22) tuned more with their partners prejudiced attitude than those paired with out-group partners (M = 1.66, SD = .38). However, those who learned their partner was a member of their out-group showed significant anti-tuning, where the high affiliative motivation participants (M = 1.58, SD = .19), tuned less than low affiliative motivation participants (M = 1.72, SD = .19). As with the implicit attitudes, a significant interaction between affiliative motivation and group membership was found, F (1, 60) = 7.729, p = .007. As predicted, looking at how those with high affiliative motivation reacted, those who learned their partner was part of their in-group (M = 1.84, SD = .26) tuned more towards the prejudiced attitudes of their interaction partner than those who learned their partner was part of the out-group (M = 1.58, SD = .19), F (1, 60) = 12.93, p = .0, one-tailed test. Likewise, when participants learned their partner was a member of their in-group, those with high affiliative motivation (M = 1.84, SD = .26) tuned more towards the prejudiced attitudes of their interaction partner than those with low affiliative motivation (M = 1.67, SD = .18), F (1, 60) = 7.73, p = .007. And, as with implicit attitudes, those with low affiliative motivation showed no tuning regardless of group membership, F (1, 60) = .136, p = .4, one-tailed test.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine whether affiliative motivation and group status have an effect on social tuning. It was predicted that the in-group and high affiliative motivation condition would result in the most social tuning. The results confirmed these predictions, as there was a significant interaction between affiliative motivation and group membership on attitudes. Participants who felt the need to get along with a partner from their within their in-group displayed an attitude, both implicitly and explicitly, that was more similar to their partner's than any other participants. The findings from this study are consistent with past research that found that affiliative motivation does leads to social tuning (Sinclair, Lowery, Hardin & Colangelo, 2005), The findings also coincide with past research that demonstrated that people were more likely to pick up on attitudes expressed by their in-group rather than the out-group (Simon, & Hamilton, 1994). One interesting note about the current study is that the social tuning occurred for negative and prejudicial attitudes. In other words, participants who tuned expressed more bias towards overweight individuals than those who did not tune. However, social tuning is not limited to negative and prejudicial attitudes as past research has shown that our attitudes can be swayed both positively (e.g., increases in self-esteem, more egalitarian views) and negatively (e.g., increased stereotyping; see Weisbuch, Sinclair, Skorinko, & Eccleston, 2009, Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994).

Future Research

Further research should be conducted in order to examine certain restrictions in the study. One limitation of the current study is that participants always learned how their partner's (whether in-group or out-group) attitude compared to a larger social group's attitude; however, this larger social group was always the in-group (i.e., average student from the same school).

Thus, the participant may have disconnected the out-group member from the larger social group, as the member's attitude was never included in it. Also, participants paired with out-group partners showed significant anti-tuning in the high affiliative motivation group. This may be due to the fact that that the larger social group used to compare the in-group and out-group partners to was part of the in-group. An experiment using a larger social group that encompasses both the in-group and out-group should be considered to resolve this potential confound.

Another option to consider would be making the out-group the stigmatized socialized group (e.g., homosexual, obese, etc.) As shown previously, members of a minority group will self-stereotype in the presence of stigmatized group members (Simon, & Hamilton, 1994). If this stigmatized partner displays prejudiced views, the participants response might change as well.

In conclusion, this study shows that social tuning results from both affiliative motivation and group status. Our attitudes can be swayed by those around us, whether they are new classmates and teachers, coworkers, or even strangers we may meet on any given day. The need to get along with those around us can sway our attitudes significantly.

Appendix A

Need for Closure Scale

(1="strongly disagree"; 6="strongly agree"]:
/1 = "I don't like situations that are uncertain."
/2 = "I like to have friends who are unpredictable."
/3 = "When dining out, I like to go to places where I have been before so that I know what to expect."
/4 = "I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand the reason why an event occurred in my life."
/5 = "I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it."
/6= "When I am confused about an important issue, I feel very upset."
/7= "I think it is fun to change my plans at the last moment."
/8= "I enjoy the uncertainty of going into a new situation without knowing what might happen."
/9 = "In most social conflicts, I can easily see which side is right and which is wrong."
/10 = "I don't like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions."
/11 = "I prefer to socialize with familiar friends because I know what to expect from them."
/12 = "I like to know what people are thinking all the time."
/13 = "I dislike it when a person's statement could mean many different things."
/14= "It's annoying to listen to someone who cannot seem to make up his or her mind."
/15 = "I feel uncomfortable when someone's meaning or intention is unclear to me."
/16 = "I'd rather know bad news than stay in a state of uncertainty."
/17 = "I dislike unpredictable situations."

Appendix B

Crandall's Antifat Body Scale

For each item, please select the number that best corresponds to your opinions.

1. People who weigh too much could lose at least some of their weight through a little exercise.

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree

very strongly   very strongly

2. I worry about becoming fat.

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree

very strongly   very strongly

3. Fat people tend to be fat pretty much through their own fault.

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree

very strongly   very strongly

4. I tend to think that people who are overweight are a little untrustworthy.

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree

very strongly   very strongly

5. Fat people make me feel somewhat uncomfortable.

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree

very strongly   very strongly

6. I feel disgusted with myself when I gain weight.

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree

very strongly   very strongly

7. One of the worst things that could happen to me would be if I gained 25 pounds.

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree

very strongly   very strongly

8. I don't have many friends that are fat.

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree

very strongly   very strongly

9. **Some people are fat because they have no willpower.**

         1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree
very strongly   very strongly

10. **Although some fat people are surely smart, in general, I think they tend to not be quite as bright as normal weight people.**

         1   2   3   4   5   6   7

I disagree   I agree
very strongly   very strongly

Appendix C

Follow Up Questions: Interaction Partner Survey

Interaction = 1="Not at all"; 7="Very well"]
/1 = "How well do you think the interaction with your partner will go?"
/2= "How well do you think you will do in the cooperative task as a task?"
/3= "How much do you think you will like your partner?"
/4= "How much do you think you will get along with your partner?"
/5= "How much do you look forward to working with your partner?"
/6= "How much would you rather to work alone than with your partner?"

Appendix D

Follow Up Questions: Community Survey

Community = 1="Strongly disagree" 7="Strongly agree"]
/1 = "I am a worthy member of the WPI community."
/2 = "I often regret that I belong to the WPI community."
/3 = "Overall, being a WPI student has very little to do with how I feel about myself."
/4 = "I feel I do not have much to offer to the WPI community."
/5 = "In general, I'm glad to be a member of the WPI community."
/6 = "Being a WPI student is an important reflection of who I am."
/7 = "I am a cooperative participant of the WPI community."
/8 = "Overall, I often feel that being a WPI student is not worthwhile."
/9 = "Being a WPI student is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am."
/10 = "I often feel I'm a useless member of the WPI community."
/11 = "I feel good about the WPI community."
/12 = "In general, being a WPI student is an important part of my self image."
/13 = "I see myself as a WPI student."
/14 = "I feel a strong sense of belonging to the WPI community."
/15 = "I am proud to be a WPI student."
/16 = "I feel strong ties with other WPI students."
/17 = "I identify with other WPI students."
/18 = "I think I have much in common with other WPI students."
/19 = "I am glad to be a WPI student."

Appendix E

Memory Assessment:

Memory
/1= "What assessment did your partner complete?
If you do not remember the name of the assessment, please describe the general topics of the assessment."

Partner info = 1="Not at all important"; 7="Very helpful"]
/1 = "How important is the topic of your partner's assessment to you?"
/2 = "How helpful was the information for getting to know your partner?"
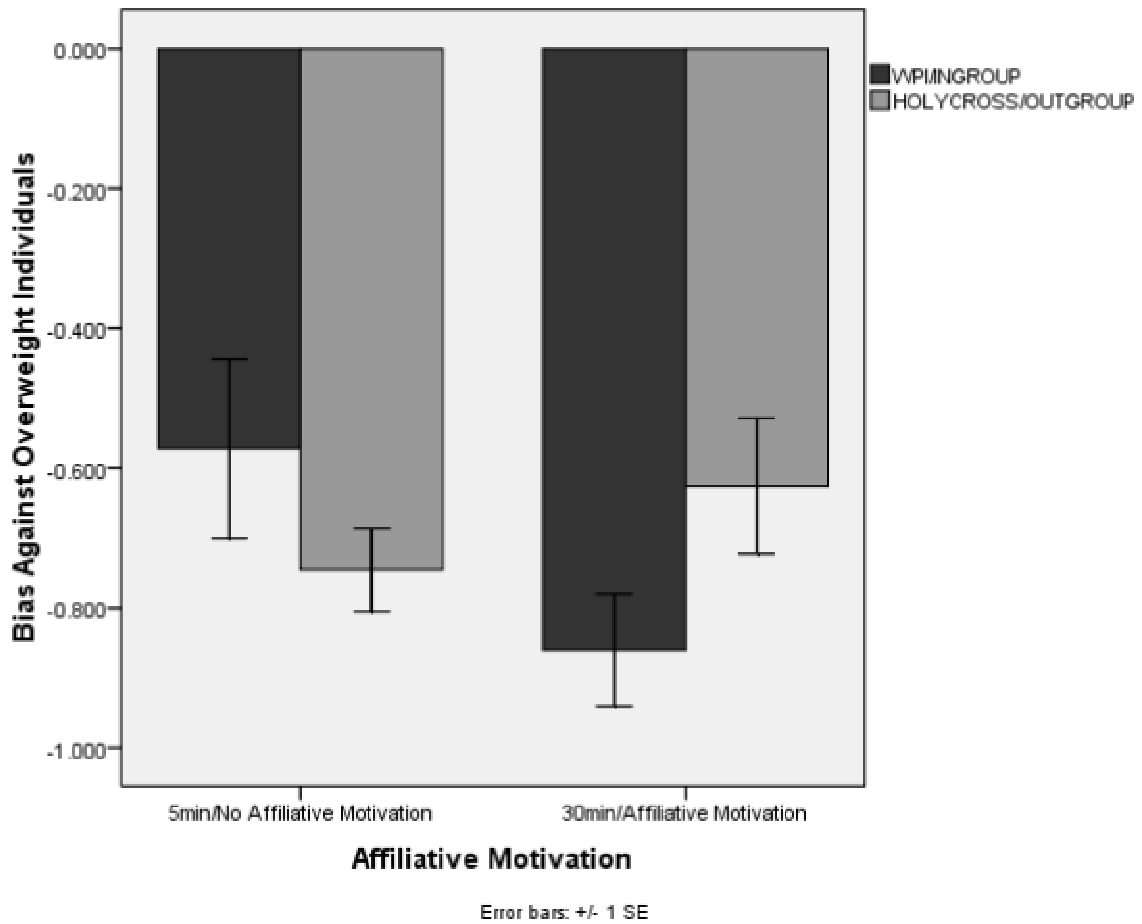
Similarity
/1 = "How surprised were you when you found out your partner's score?"
/2 = "How similar do you think your partner's attitudes are to other WPI students?"
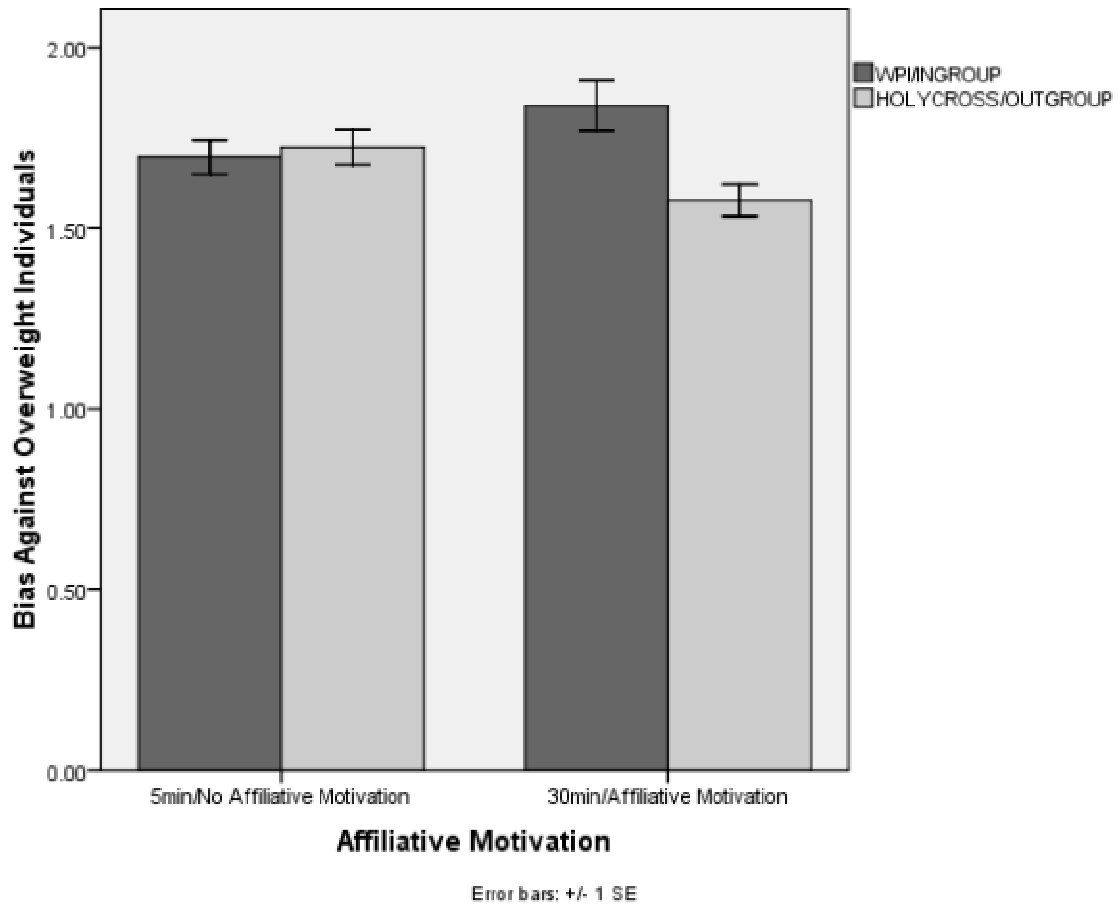
Appendix F

Participants' Implicit Attitudes

Error bars: +/- 1 SE

Appendix G

Participants' Explicit Attitudes:

Error bars: +/- 1 SE

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