

## **Weighting of Own Versus Partner Input: A Comparison of Two Cultures**

### **INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Popular wisdom holds that “two heads are better than one”—presumably because individuals can correct each others’ errors and excesses and benefit from each others’ insights. However a series of studies in our laboratory (and in studies with our Israeli collaborators) show that dyad members who are given access to each others’ assessments and invited to give those estimates as much or as little weight as they wish in revising their own characteristically fail to take full advantage of that opportunity. That is, they give much less weight to their dyad partners’ assessments than their own, and pay a price in terms of accuracy for doing so.

Our research to date has explored the robustness of this phenomenon by showing that neither continuous feedback about accuracy nor a history of prior collaboration induces dyad members to give due weight to their input of their partners. We now are expanding our research in several directions of potential theoretical and applied interest. In the former respect we are exploring the links between this phenomenon and the more pervasive tendency for people to attribute disagreement to the other party’s errors and biases rather than their own. In the latter respect we have begun to investigate whether the same phenomenon can be seen not only in estimates about facts of business and demography (the subject of estimates in our initial studies) but also in estimates made by competitive ballroom dancers about the evaluations they receive from professional judges and by lawyers and law students about the settlement value of tort cases.

There is, however, one intriguing direction that we would like to take this research—a direction not supportable by our current funding sources but one singularly appropriate for research at Stanford wherein the study of cultural psychology in general and “East-West” (or collectivist vs individualist or interdependent vs independent constructions of self) differences in basic psychological processes has been studied in considerable depth. The undergraduate whose work we would like to support with a VPUE grant has been exposed to this tradition of cultural psychology and the project she proposes to embark upon seems both highly interesting and highly feasible to complete.

### **STUDENT PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of the proposed project is to explore the possibility that individuals who have been exposed to the values and world-view of East Asian culture will show greater willingness to give due weight to the assessments of peers in revising their own. To address this question we will conduct an experiment comparing the behavior of participants of East Asian descent to a control group of non-East Asian participants using the experimental paradigm we developed in our prior research. In brief, during experimental sessions participants will work in dyads to make estimates of ten different numerical quantities. Estimates will first be made individually, after which participants will exchange their estimates with their dyad partner and have the opportunity to revise them to any degree they see fit. Next, dyad members will engage in a discussion period the goal of which will be to reach a single joint set of estimates. Finally, participants will have another opportunity to offer individual estimates, knowing the reasons on which their dyad partner had based his or her estimates.

One possibility is that participants of East Asian descent will give greater weight to the estimates made by their partners in offering their revised and final estimates than participants of European descent. If so, we can expect these dyads to achieve greater improvement in the accuracy of their estimates from round to round, although the capacity and willingness of dyad members to recognize instances when unequal weighting (because of differences in certainty or familiarity with the domain of judgment called for in a particular estimate) would be justified will also be worth exploring. The other, equally interesting, possibility is that dyad members from cultures that value interdependence more and independence less than the dominant US culture will nevertheless show the same undervaluing of peer input as seen in our prior research. (In the latter case, the follow-up research would focus more specifically on weight given to friends vs. strangers). But

regardless of whether our results support particularistic vs. universalistic views of social and cognitive functioning we think the work will be of considerable interest to the relevant scientific community and will certainly provide a valuable research experience for the student we seek to support.

#### STUDENT RESEARCHER ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

The undergraduate researcher will be an integral member of the research team with primary responsibility for the day-to-day execution of the research agenda. This will include assembling research materials, recruiting eligible study participants, facilitating experimental sessions, conducting follow-up communication with participants, and data entry. Specifically, the student researcher will be responsible for preparing and conducting research sessions with approximately 50 pairs of participants and entering the resulting data into statistical software for analysis.

Throughout the project the student will be in frequent communication with me and the senior graduate student members of the research team, reporting on the progress of the experimental sessions, observations of participant behavior and insights regarding the psychological questions of interest.

#### MENTORSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

The student researcher will be involved in every stage of the research process frequently meeting with the faculty sponsor as well as graduate students involved in the project. These meetings will provide the undergraduate researcher with training necessary to carry out the tasks of this research project as well as broader skills required for research in social psychology. Discussions during these meetings will address key topics including designing experiments in the social sciences, interacting with human subjects, preparing data for statistical analysis, use of rudimentary descriptive and inferential statistics, and preparation of manuscripts for publication.

In working with the undergraduate researcher my graduate students and I will encourage the undergraduate to think hard about conceptual and logistical issues and to further develop her own research interests and more toward designing independent research. The faculty and graduate students involved in this project will be readily available to the undergraduate researcher in an advisory capacity both for issues related to specific project goals as well as the undergraduate's own career planning and development.

#### STUDENT RESEARCHER QUALIFICATIONS

Shira Beery, the undergraduate researcher selected for participation in this project, has extensive experience serving as a research assistant for social psychology research. As an International Relations major and an active participant in the Stanford Center for International Conflict and Negotiation she has demonstrated long-standing interest in issues of collaboration between parties with opposing viewpoints – in a sense the very question that initially motivated the research of which the current project is an offshoot. The members of the research team have confidence in her ability to conduct the research in a professional and effective manner, as well as in her potential to develop into an independent researcher in her own right.

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**Student Stipends or hourly wages:**

**Requested**

Spring quarter	1300
Summer quarter	2080
<b>Subtotal</b>	3380

**Materials cost for supplies:**

<b>Subtotal</b>	

**Student Travel Expenses:**

<b>Subtotal</b>	

**Other:**

Human subject costs	500
<b>Subtotal</b>	500

**Grand Subtotal**

**Matching Funds:**

3880


**Total Matching Funds**

**Total Requested**

3880

**Budget Notes:**

Funding for human subjects will cover roughly half of the total subject participation costs of approximately \$1000 which Ross will supplement with his private research fund account. Ross's grant will also cover costs of the senior graduate student who is an integral member of the research team that will mentor the undergraduate receiving VPUE funds.