

## Can hate be diluted?

Negative social evaluation can create a negative emotional response. Extreme negative evaluations create fear or anger and reduce self-efficacy (Pekrun, 2006; Shields, 2015). These negative feelings could harm the individual and they almost certainly reduce performance. Factors that neutralize the harmful effect of negative social evaluation could have utility in any performance or work setting.

One factor that should be considered is the size of the social group within which the negative evaluation occurred and the “weight” of the negative evaluation. In simple terms, perhaps several positive or neutral evaluations can offset the effect of a single negative evaluation.

This test will measure whether several neutral or positive evaluation will reduce the impact of one negative evaluation. The hypothesis is that in a larger group one negative evaluation will have less of an emotional impact on an individual.

### Method

#### *Participants.*

About 160 student participants will be tested. Participation will partially satisfy a course requirement. The participants are likely to be between 18 and 22 years of age.

#### *Apparatus & Materials.*

All of the activity and information in the experiment will be controlled and presented by Qualtrics. The performance test is unscrambling anagrams. There will be 60 anagrams of 4 to 13 letters long. The measure of effect is the PANAS scale (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988).

#### *Procedure.*

Participants will read and enter an electronic signature for consent. The participants will then complete the PANAS. Participants will then be assigned to a group of either 2 or 8. Participants will be told that multiple groups are competing in the performance task. The participants will be given a notecard that tells them the size of their team. There will be no other indicator of team membership. As participants look around the room there will be no indication of which other participants are on each team. There will be no contact or communication between team members.

Participants will then work on the anagram task for 6 minutes. At the end of this task, the participants will be told that their scores have been distributed to everyone in their group. Participants will believe this is 1 or 7 other people. The participants will then receive fabricated performance scores from the 1 or 7 “members” of their team. These performance data will be fabricated.

The participants will rate these performances and express whether they want the team members to remain in the team.

After submitting the performance ratings for their team members, each participant will receive fabricated feedback from their team members. The feedback will show that one team member does not want the participant to remain on the team. The feedback will be very negative. This will be either 100% negative evaluation in a team of 2 or 14% negative evaluation in a team of 8.

After reading the fabricated evaluation data the participants will complete the PANAS scale. After participants complete the PANAS the second time the procedure will be complete. The participants will be debriefed and excused.

#### Proposed analysis

The change in the PANAS score will be the dependent measure in this study. The group size, 2 versus 8, will be the independent variable. The analysis will be an ANOVA for a 2X2 mixed design.

#### Implications

The findings could show whether positive individuals can offset the negative impact of critical individuals. In simple terms, can the presence of neutral or positive people dilute the harmful impact of one hateful individual? If this effect were confirmed it would have implications for group management in many performance settings.

#### References

- Pekrun, R. (2006). The Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions: Assumptions, Corollaries, and Implications for Educational Research and Practice. *Educational Psychology Review, 18*, 315–341.
- Shields, S. (2015). ‘My work is bleeding’: exploring students’ emotional responses to first-year assignment feedback. *Teaching in Higher Education, 20*, 614–624.
- Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: the PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*, 1063-1070.