

ABSTRACT & RATIONALE

Abstract:

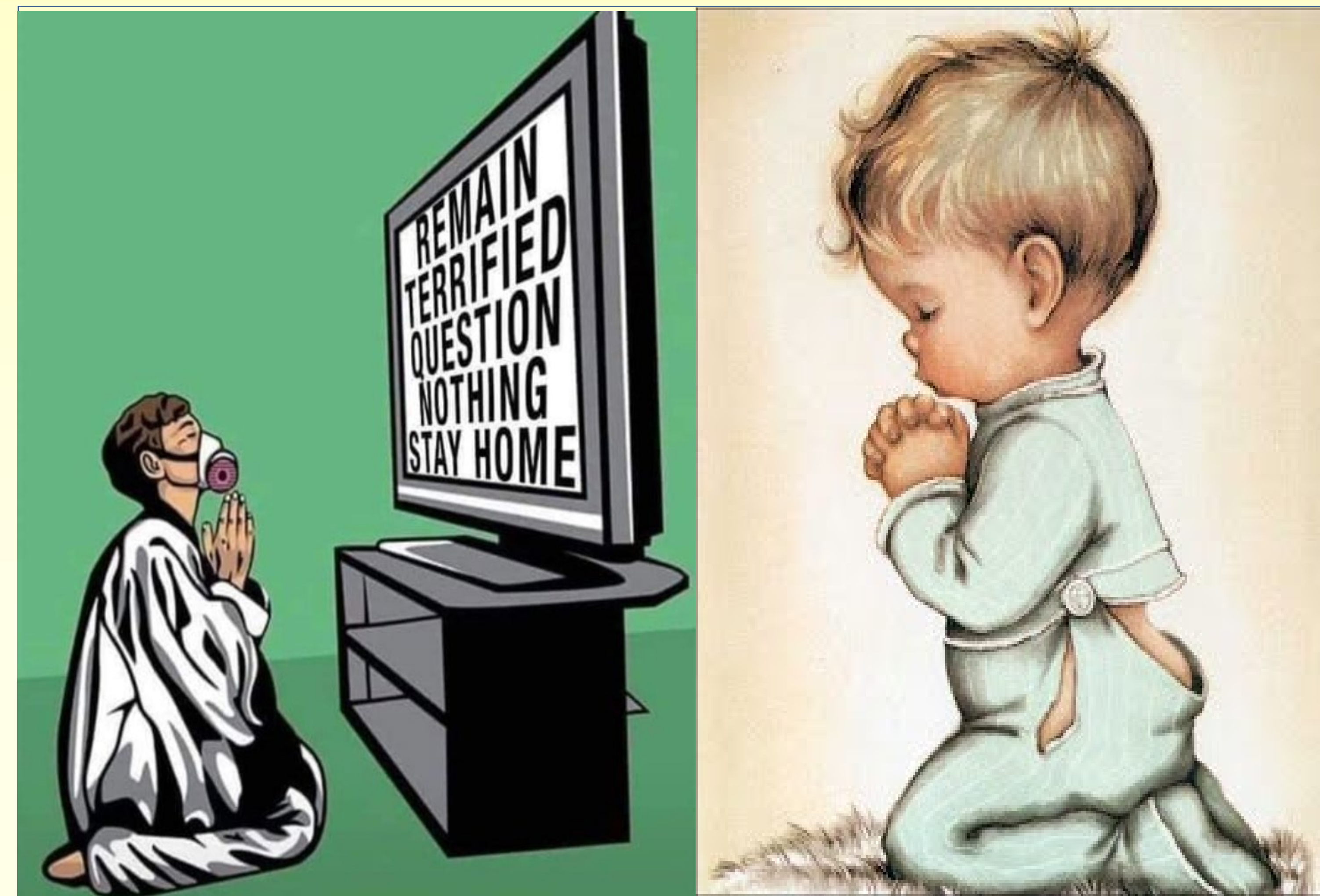
Deindividuation is a term in psychology that refers to an individual's loss of self-awareness among groups during situations in which they believe they cannot be personally identified. Urich & Tombs (2014) conducted an experiment using deindividuation with shoppers and found lower levels of emotional discomfort among customers that avoided unwanted social interaction from salespeople by having the presence of multiple customers. They also experienced lower public self-awareness which would, in turn, mitigate others evaluative concerns in the store itself. Politics and Religion are some of the most controversial topics. Just the sight or opinions of other individuals alone may form collective beliefs and cloud judgment when dealing with religious and political aspects. Early studies on deindividuation and religion displayed that when Catholicism was made salient to Catholic participants, they decreased their contribution to public goods, thus confirming that trust falls when religion is primed (Benjamin et al., 2016). The potential danger here is that conformation around ideas can just as likely be dangerous as it could be positive. The purpose of this study is to see if individuals' bond through deindividuation processes. My investigation will examine the participant discourse through suggestive clips relating to either political or religious material. If propaganda works through the subconscious, then similar methods may be applied through deindividuation to draw out ideas and conversations amongst the individuals.

Rationale:

The primary hypothesis of this study is that the experimental group will talk longer and will converse more genuinely amongst one another. I hope my findings add to the deindividuation literature by examining the concept in the current climate with a rural population which will extend studies conducted by Asch (1951) and Benjamin et al. (2016). The secondary aim of this study is to facilitate this experiment well enough hoping individuals in the experimental group walk out knowing that they said everything they wanted to and that they ultimately feel heard.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Participants in Asch's (1951) experiment conformed to a wrong answer despite their initial beliefs, all for the sake of avoiding friction. They knew the answer was incorrect, but saw others unanimously choosing a different option. Asch's results revealed that 76.5% of individuals conformed at least once during the experiment, later explaining that it was because humans are considered social creatures and want to be liked by others. It also displayed that rational thinking can easily be suppressed if the majority holds a different belief.
- In the study conducted by Kofta & Soral (2020), results showed that, to a degree, their beliefs around a conspiracy are related to the stability of their voting preference. It also showed that those who voted for liberal parties in the previous election were the same individuals that believed in the Round Table conspiracy and would more likely change their political preference in the next election. Whereas Kofta and Soral (2020) found that liberals were inclined to believe the conspiracy, here in the US, Republicans seem to adhere more to the QAnon conspiracy.
- Shariff and Norenzayan (2007) conducted an experiment in which participants were given the task of unscrambling sentences that included 5 important deity terms: spirit, divine, God, sacred, and prophet. These words served as the priming. The results provided evidence showing that religious reminders affect an individual's behavior. This therein leads to both cooperation and trust and inhibits social defections. One theory produced from this is that these religious primes birth the idea that God is watching and will punish sinners (e.g., Gervais & Norenzayan; Shariff & Norenzayan 2007).



RESEARCH QUESTIONS, PARTICIPANTS, MEASURES & PROCEDURES

Hypotheses/Research Questions:

1. Can purposefully selected political and religious material influence college students to vocally share their beliefs in a group setting through the process of *deindividuation*?
2. How much does sight of one another affect general conversations or even potential confrontation?

Participants:

The participants will be college students. There will be no limitations as far as classification (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, etc.). I will be recruiting participants with posters, emails, and physical recruitment on campus and classes.

Measures:

Audio recordings will be analyzed using qualitative and quantitative software called Dedoose and observations will be used to support the findings from the data analysis. Data will be recorded with a voice recorder as well as collected and reviewed. Factors such as attitudes and mannerisms will be recorded by the second confederate in the observation room. After the experiment is completed, participants will finally be asked to rate their experience on a sheet of paper. The rating will be from 1 to 10. 1 representing complete discomfort throughout, and 10 representing complete positive experience. There will also be a comments box for any additional thoughts or suggestions by the participants.

Procedures:

This is a mixed methods study that will involve an observation room to record and collect data from participants and an evaluation sheet to fill out and rate experiences. A Bluetooth speaker will allow cues to be set without my presence in the laboratory room. An additional camera will be placed in the room as well for better quality sound. An observation room with a one-way mirror will be used to conduct this study. Firstly, once participants have been randomly assigned to the experimental and control group, they will sit in a room and a recorder will be placed in the room. Data will be recorded during observation periods as well as live notes during the experiment.

EXPECTED RESULTS & LIMITATIONS

Expected Results:

I predict that deindividuation will be more active, and conformity will decrease for the experimental group compared to control group. I expect that this first hypothesis will be accepted because the masked group may voluntarily confess what they believe and endorse after the study.

My second hypothesis is that individuals in the experimental group will have more friction amongst one another after the material is presented. I predict that the second hypothesis will be accepted because the identity of the experimental group will never be revealed to one another.

Limitations:

One of the limitations of this study was the fact that the participants had to be solely from this university. Another limitation is that the participants might recognize one another. Also, the participants have the right to exit the experiment whenever they want. Another limitation is that the groups will not know what material is going to be solicited, so they might now have an opinion. It is also a small community, so typically participants will range from age groups of 18-25. Ideally, I would like the study to be conducted on all ages, as all amounts of life experience help to delve into different areas of ideas.

REFERENCES

- Asch, S. E. (1951). Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgment. In H. Guetzkow (ed.) *Groups, leadership and men*. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Press.
- Benjamin, D. J., Choi, J. J., & Fisher, G. (2016). Religious Identity and Economic Behavior. *Review of Economics & Statistics*, 98(4), 617–637. https://doi-org.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/10.1162/REST_a_00586
- Clark, K. Jason, Wegener, T. Duane, Brinol, Pablo, & Petty, E. Richard. (2009). Discovering That the Shoe Fits: The Self-Validating Role of Stereotypes. *Psychological Science*, 20(7), 846.
- Kofta, Mirosław & Soral, Wiktor. (2020). Belief in the Round Table Conspiracy and Political Division in Poland. *Social Psychological Bulletin*, 14(4). <https://doi.org/10.32872/spb.v14i4.2435>
- Shariff, Azim F., and Ara Norenzayan, "God Is Watching You: Priming God Concepts Increases Prosocial Behavior in an Anonymous Economic Game," *Psychological Science* 18 (2007), 803–809.
- Urich, S., & Tombs, A. (2014). Retail customers' selfawareness: The deindividuation effects of others. *Journal of Business Research*, 67, 1439–1446. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.07.023
- Vilanova, Felipe, Beria, Francielle Machado, Costa, Ângelo Brandelli & Koller, Silvia Helena. (2017). Deindividuation: From Le Bon to the social identity model of deindividuation effects. *Cogent Psychology*, 1. <https://doi-org.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/23311908.2017.1308104>