

The existence of In-Group Favouritism between Younger Generation Ethnic Groups

Frank Zhao, June 2010

Abstract

In the past, there have been many studies on social identity (Blacksacademy, 2005), in group favouritism (Rabbie & Bekkers, 1976) and ethnocentrism (Phinney, 1990). However, there has not been evident research that ties these concepts together. This experiment aimed to investigate the existence of in group favouritism between different ethnic groups of younger generations. Participants were asked to complete an online survey that required them to rank averaged faces of different ethnicities in order, from most preferable to least preferable, based on their physical appearances. Forty results of those who were aged fourteen to eighteen were compiled and subsequently analysed. Findings suggest that younger generation participants from an Asian background were more likely to feel comfortable with of their own race, while participants from a Caucasian background were more likely to prefer individuals of an Asian background.

In Group Favouritism and Ethnic Groups

Many studies by social psychologists have shown the presence of in group favouritism and its effects. Tajfel's social identity theory states that individuals instinctively strive for positive self image, and that social identity is enhanced by the process of categorising people into in groups and out groups (Tajfel H. , 1982). One would expect to find it difficult to instil a feeling of group cohesiveness upon a group of strangers. According to research, however, numerous investigators (for reviews; see Dion, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) have found that by simply assigning individuals into groups leads to some degree of group loyalty. For example, Rabbie and Bekkers (1976) randomly assigned individuals to groups based on the flipping of a coin. After being assigned to random groups in this fashion, the participants were then given the opportunity to rate one another on a number of personal attributes. Even though the subjects were strangers to one another, there was a significant tendency to rate in group members higher than out group members.

So how are emotions and attributions ascribed to in groups and out groups? In a social psychological account, Leynes (et al.) describes how people are more motivated to reserve the 'uniquely human' essence for in groups, and to withhold it from out groups (J.P., et al., 2000). This phenomenon, dubbed as 'infrahumanization', involves attributing greater intelligence (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998) and language competency (Giles & Coupland, 1991) to in groups, while denying out groups those same competencies (Harris & Fiske, (in press)).

Similarly, there have been many studies on ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the name given to the tendency for individuals to interpret human behaviour from the viewpoint of our own ethnic, social or other group (Barger, 2010). The work of Phinney on ethnocentrism and ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990) and Hrabá and Grant's doll choice experiment (as cited in Hill, 2001), have showed the existence of ethnocentric bias, even in children as young as four to eight year olds (in the case of the latter), where it was found that when children were presented with a white and black doll, they preferred the doll that they identified most with.

However, there has been no evident record of any research done to investigate the existence of in group favouritism between different ethnic groups. This experiment aimed to investigate whether in group favouritism is evident between different ethnic groups of younger generations. We hypothesised that participants aged fourteen to eighteen would rank averaged faces of the same ethnicity as themselves higher on an online survey. In this experiment, the groups would be dynamic, the in group being the faces with the same ethnicity as themselves, and the out group being the faces of people with a different ethnicity. The independent variables in this experiment were the faces that were presented to the participants, and the dependent variables were the rankings that participants submitted, as well as the ethnic background of the participant.

Method

Participants

The participants comprised of anyone who found and completed the survey. This totalled to 43 people. The data selected for subsequent analysis comprised of 20 Asians and 20 Caucasians. Spam participants who contributed false results were disregarded.

Design

The independent variable was the faces that were shown to the participant. Two sets of twelve faces were available on the survey, the first set was required, and the second set was optional. Averaged photographs of people from each of the six main racial groups (African, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Indian and Middle Eastern) were used. Each photograph was created by using an online application to average faces of the same ethnicity. An averaged male and an averaged female face were used for each ethnicity.

Materials and Procedure

Two different sets of twelve faces were put on an online survey. Each set consisted of a male and female of each ethnicity. The participants were required to input their country of origin and birth year, then rank the faces in order of preference, from one to twelve, one being the person they would feel most comfortable interacting with first. The survey was hosted on a web server and was available on the internet for a week, making it accessible to anyone. The survey was publicised on various social networking sites, such as the Facebook and Twitter services. After a week, the submissions were downloaded and analysed.

Results

The data consisted of the rankings of the faces, from most preferable to least preferable, along with some information about the participants themselves, such as age and ethnicity. Results obtained from older participants were disregarded, and the results of only those who were 14 to 18 years of age were kept. The data was then sorted into the two main ethnicities that were evident in results (Asian and Caucasian), as presented in Table 1.1 and 1.2. Twenty results for each the Asian and Caucasian groups were selected and analysed. From Chart 1.1, it seems that participants of an Asian background seemed to rank faces of the same ethnicity as themselves higher. However, in Chart 1.2, it seems that this is not the case for participants of Caucasian background, who rated faces of Asian background higher also.

Out of the Asian participants (Chart 1.1), it can be seen that out of the 20 Asian participants, 85% ranked an Asian face in the top five, compared to the 65% of Asian participants who ranked a Caucasian face in the top five. Looking at the Caucasian participants, however, only 55% chose a Caucasian face in the top five (Chart 1.2). It should also be noted that 85% of the Caucasian participants ranked an Asian face in the top five.

Table 1.1: Frequency and race selected by participants of Asian background, by rank.

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Asians	4	7	6	9	8	5	8	7	7	7	8	4
Caucasians	9	9	6	2	6	8	7	7	9	4	6	8

Table 1.2: Frequency and race selected by participants of Caucasian background, by rank.

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Asian	3	6	0	4	4	2	5	5	2	4	2	2
Caucasian	1	2	2	4	2	2	3	4	2	5	6	6

Frequency of Choices Between Asia and Caucasian by Participants of Asian Background

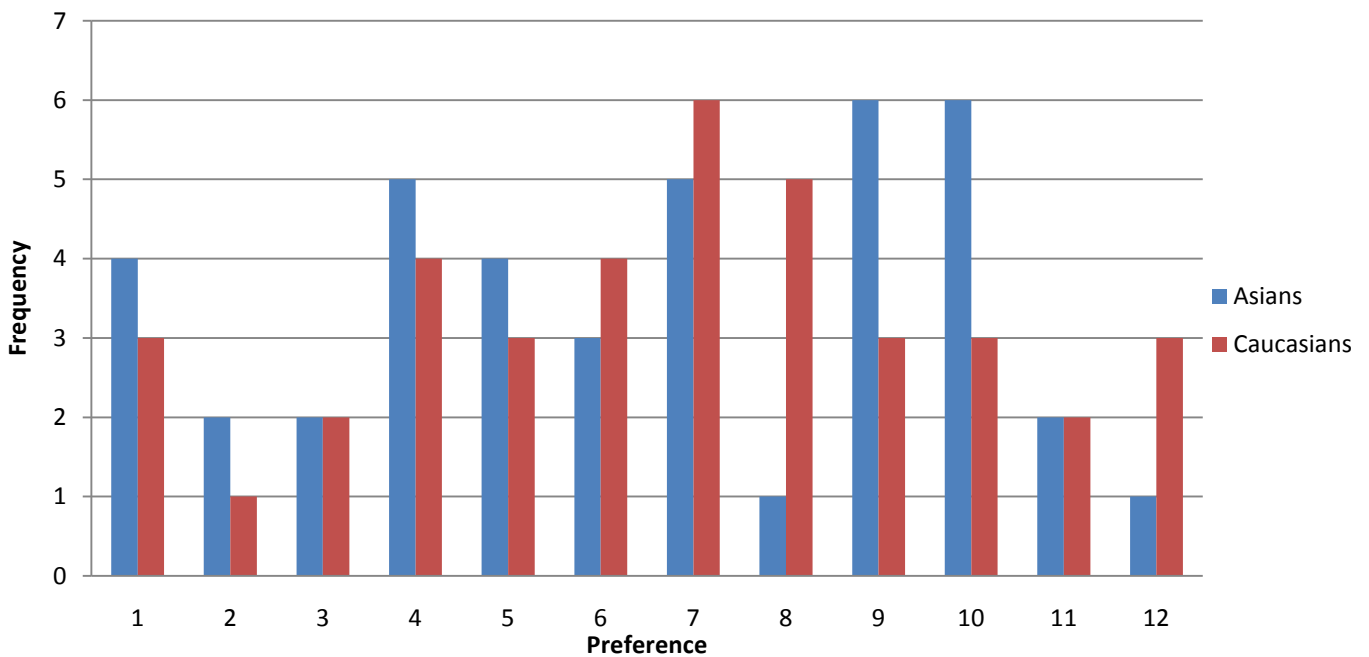


Chart 1.1: From this chart, it seems that individuals from an Asian background seemed to rate faces of Asian background higher than the Caucasian faces. From the first five choices, it seems that participants, on average, ranked the Asian faces higher.

Frequency of Choices Between Asia and Caucasian by Participants of Caucasian Background

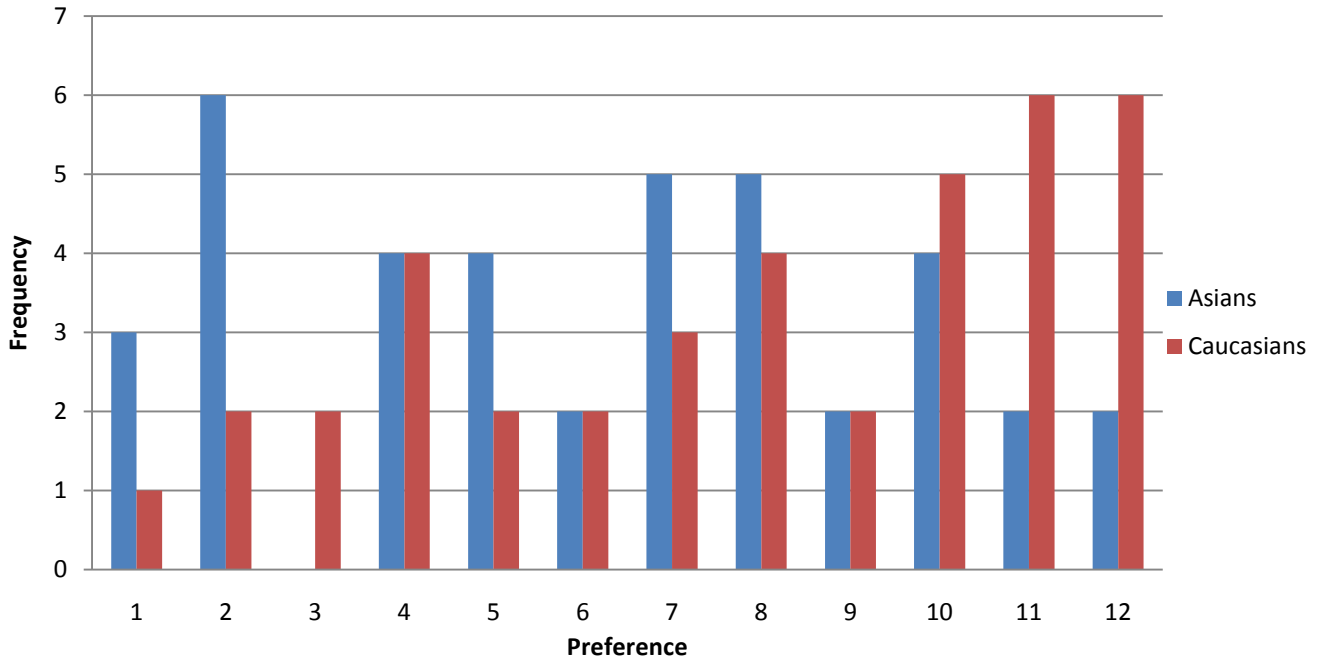


Chart 1.2: From this chart, it can be seen that, on average, participants of Caucasian background also ranked the Asian faces higher than the Caucasian faces.

Discussion

By using averaged faces, we can be sure that there was no bias towards faces of different attractiveness. A male and female face of each ethnicity was also used to remove any gender bias that may occur. This ensured the only physical attribute of the faces the participant could rank was their corresponding ethnicities. No mention of the purpose of the experiment was evident nor was it alluded to, which prevented results from pre-biased participants. A spam filter was also used, which enabled us to limit survey entries to one entry per person, and also filtered out the results obtained that were not realistic. For example, the results submitted by a person who ranked the first face as every choice, or a person who ranked the faces from one to twelve in order would have been disregarded.

The theory of in group favouritism suggests that people in a group would be more likely to make positive attributions towards others in the same group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). From this, we drew a logical link that people in the same ethnic groups would be more likely to make positive attributions towards in the same ethnic group. By asking participants to rank their preferences towards the faces, we assumed that the participants had made positive attributions towards the people they ranked higher and less positive attributions towards the faces they ranked lower. However, the experiment did not investigate whether these positive attributions had been made.

Research done by Cortes (et al., as cited in J.P., et al., 2000) indicate that when an out group member is individualised, infrahumanization, or the belief that people in the out group are inferior to themselves (the in group), seems to vanish. Leynes and colleagues (J.P., et al., 2000) interpret these findings as evidence that infrahumanization is only an intergroup phenomenon, not an interpersonal phenomenon. Gerad and Hoyt (Gerad & Hoyt, 1974) also found that the size of the group affected in group bias, when they conducted an experiment involving rating in group and out group essays. Members were assigned into groups containing two, five or eight persons, and were given the opportunity to evaluate an essay that was supposedly written by an in group or out group member. They found that members of the smaller groups tend to exhibit less in group bias than those in larger groups. This may have had an influence on our experiment, as the survey exposed individual participants to individual faces, rather than exposing a number of participants to a group of faces. This raises the question of whether infrahumanization is indeed only an intergroup phenomenon. Future studies should conduct the experiment with both individuals, as well as groups, to determine whether infrahumanization is more evident in the latter.

After the survey was completed, we observed some of the comments that the participants made towards the survey. Most participants commented that the survey made them feel “racist”, as the only element on which they would rank the faces on were their physical appearances. This may have lead to a form of cognitive dissonance; when an individual holds a belief and a task that contradicts this belief, they must either change their belief or their behaviour. In this case, the participants may have changed their behaviour in order to suit their beliefs, ranking the faces in a way that they deem to be ‘non-racist’. This was clearly evident when participants were completing the survey with people they were familiar with nearby. This peer influence added to the contradictions, so that the participant was essentially presented with a task that contradicts both their beliefs and their social norms.

This experiment aimed to investigate the presence of in group favouritism between younger generation ethnic groups. Results seem to show that there was little to no presence of in group favouritism between younger generation ethnic groups. However, the experiment tested and obtained results indicating the likelihood that participants would prefer people of the same ethnicity, but did not investigate whether the cause of this behaviour was a direct result of in group favouritism.

The results obtained from this experiment indicate that there is little to no correlation between the ethnicity of the participant and who they preferred. Although the data shows that 85% of Asian participants chose a corresponding Asian face, the Caucasian group contradicts this correlation- only 55% of the Caucasian group chose a face of corresponding ethnicity. Thus, the only correlation that existed was in the Asian participants; however, the correlation was neither conclusive nor strong enough to indicate a direct correlation between the two variables. Our hypothesis was that the participants would rank people who belong to the same ethnic group as themselves as more preferable, in relation to others. There has been a very minor indication of this, but it is not

conclusive, and therefore is not enough to support the hypothesis. A larger, more in depth experiment would be recommended for this topic. Future experiments should include both immigrants as well as citizens, to see whether being in 'unfamiliar territory' affects the levels of in group bias. If done correctly, the results of future research may be an indication to the prominence of racism in society today. The data from a larger scale study could also be more accurately generalised to a larger population.

The results obtained from this experiment did not show a conclusive correlation between the two variables, the participant's ethnicity and the ranks assigned to the faces. On one hand, participants from an Asian background seemed to prefer the faces that were of the same ethnic group as themselves, but on the other, participants from a Caucasian background seemed to prefer faces belonging to the Asian ethnic group as well. Thus it seems that the presence of inter-group favouritism was only slightly evident towards immigrated citizens; however a larger, in depth study is necessary to produce conclusive results.

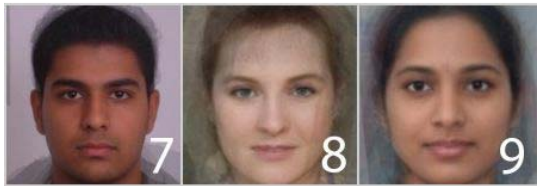
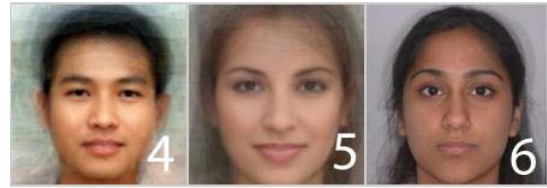
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Appendix A: Raw Data

Age	Ethnicity	Rank											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
17	Caucasian	11	10	9	3	12	8	2	4	9	5	7	1
16	Caucasian	11	8	12	3	1	2	7	6	4	9	5	10
17	Caucasian	12	10	2	8	5	6	9	1	11	4	3	7
17	Caucasian	4	10	11	9	2	1	6	12	3	5	7	8
17	Caucasian	12	10	11	4	2	6	9	7	6	1	8	3
16	Caucasian	9	6	12	3	5	10	2	11	7	4	1	8
17	Caucasian	12	10	3	1	8	11	5	6	4	2	9	7
17	Caucasian	10	5	3	12	9	4	6	11	8	2	1	7
16	Caucasian	5	12	9	10	6	4	3	8	7	11	2	2
16	Caucasian	9	7	12	5	4	10	6	11	2	1	3	8
17	Caucasian	11	6	3	5	2	12	9	8	7	1	10	4
16	Caucasian	10	11	9	2	5	12	1	6	7	4	3	8
16	Caucasian	12	10	4	5	9	11	8	6	3	1	2	7
17	Caucasian	4	5	2	8	9	11	12	3	7	6	1	10
17	Caucasian	8	3	2	4	12	11	1	9	7	5	10	6
17	Caucasian	3	4	12	1	7	2	11	5	8	10	9	6
16	Caucasian	9	5	4	2	11	10	6	8	3	12	1	7
17	Caucasian	5	9	8	12	7	4	11	2	3	1	6	10
17	Caucasian	5	8	9	4	12	11	10	7	6	3	2	1
16	Caucasian	9	5	8	6	3	2	4	11	7	10	1	12
16	Asian	9	12	11	5	7	8	6	10	4	1	2	3
16	Asian	6	9	2	1	4	5	8	11	10	7	12	3
16	Asian	9	3	10	7	6	2	5	4	12	8	11	1
17	Asian	12	10	3	11	9	8	2	1	5	6	4	7
16	Asian	10	8	9	12	11	3	7	1	5	6	4	2
16	Asian	9	4	5	8	11	12	10	1	7	3	6	2
17	Asian	8	4	9	5	11	12	1	3	2	6	7	10
17	Asian	4	11	8	9	12	5	1	6	3	5	7	2
17	Asian	6	5	11	4	7	12	2	10	4	1	3	9
16	Asian	11	9	12	6	3	12	5	7	1	4	8	2
17	Asian	12	10	2	3	11	8	9	1	5	6	4	7
16	Asian	12	9	8	1	5	3	7	10	4	11	2	6
18	Asian	1	10	11	6	4	3	2	9	8	7	5	12
17	Asian	8	5	3	11	4	12	7	2	6	9	10	1
16	Asian	9	6	8	12	7	5	4	3	2	11	1	10
17	Asian	7	3	4	6	1	10	2	11	12	9	8	5
18	Asian	1	3	8	2	5	10	9	12	7	4	6	11
17	Asian	2	4	1	12	3	8	10	5	6	7	9	10
17	Asian	12	2	3	8	4	10	11	7	9	6	1	5
17	Asian	4	6	2	7	3	10	12	1	11	9	8	5

Appendix B: Face Sets



1. Averaged faces Set A

2. Averaged faces Set B

Appendix C: Survey

Due to space limitations, a portion of each survey has been reproduced here.

Help me with some research

Please help me collect some data by completing this short questionnaire. Your confidentiality will be assured. Required fields are denoted by [*].

Administration

Do you have a Y chromosome? (If you were male at birth, please choose 'Yes'.) *

- Yes
 No

What year were you born in? *

What is your country of origin? *

If you were to meet these people, who would you feel most comfortable talking to?
Please arrange your preferences, first choice being the most preferable.

First choice *

Second choice *

Third choice *

Fourth choice *

Fifth choice *

Sixth choice *

Seventh choice *

Help me get more data!

Please help me collect more data by completing this short survey. Your confidentiality will be assured.
[Optional]

Administration

Do you have a Y chromosome? (If you were male at birth, please choose 'Yes'.) *

- Yes
 No

What year were you born in? *

What is your country of origin?

Thanks for helping me get more data! If you were to meet these people, who would you feel most comfortable talking to? Please arrange your preferences, first choice being the most preferable.

First choice *

Second choice *

Third choice *

Fourth choice *

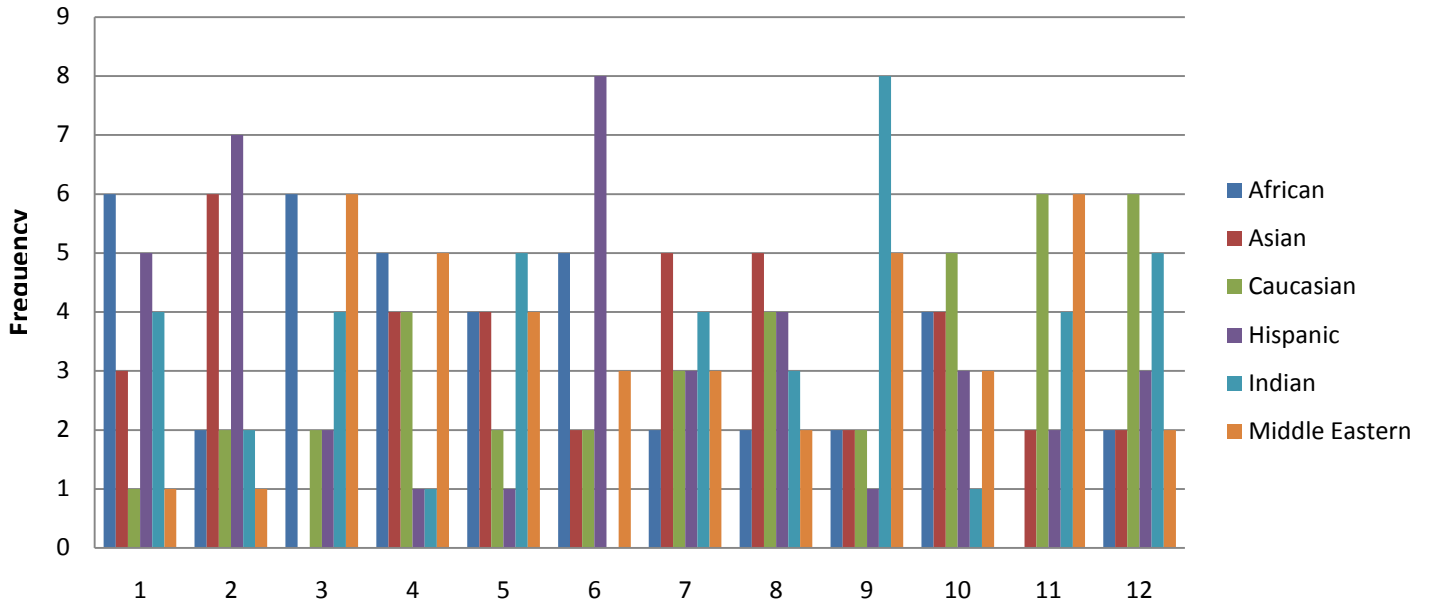
Fifth choice *

Sixth choice *

Seventh choice *

Appendix D: Additional Charts

Frequency of Choices by Participants of Caucasian Ethnic Group



Frequency of Choices by Participants of Asian Ethnic Group

