

Psyc3112

April 18th 2007

Group Communication

Communicating in groups
and between groups

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Presents:

SHARON DANE
PhD Candidate in Social Psychology

in
"Postgraduate Study in Social Psychology"

Sharon will discuss postgraduate study options in the field of social psychology using her own research into disclosing same-sex sexual orientation as an example. She will also cover some career options after completing postgraduate study. Students currently engaged in study into social psychology, or those interested in the field are encouraged to attend.

When: Friday 20th of April
Where: Building 24a, Room 306
Time: 4:00pm to 5:00pm

Come to this seminar and learn where studies in social psychology can take you!

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Today

- Who am I and why am I here?
- Why look at the group level?
- Within-group dynamics
 - Expertise, likeability
- Between-group dynamics
 - Group membership as a trigger for heuristic acceptance or dismissal
 - “Outsider” status
 - Group membership as a trigger for systematic processing
- Summary and applied implications

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Why look at the group level?

- Is communication about transmitting info?
- Petty & Cacioppo (1986: p. 2):
 - “Existing literature supported the view that nearly every independent variable studied increased [effective communication] in some circumstances, had no effect in others, and decreased [the effectiveness of communication] in still other contexts”
- People are complex and communication is one of the trickiest psych processes around

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What's communication about?

- Five big frameworks in 20th c. for effectiveness of communication - "persuasion"
 - **Information processing**
 - The Yale group (Hovland et al.)
 - The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)
 - The **Heuristic Systematic Model** (Chaiken, 1980)
 - The **group approach** – Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, Turner, Terry) and its offshoot, Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, Gallois, & others)

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Information Processing Approach

- Communication is primarily about learning information
 - People have a motive for **accuracy** (focus on knowledge and instrumental functions of communications)
 - Ignorance & faulty knowledge -> bad decisions
- People talk to each other to **learn info**
- Extension since 90s: People focus on information to **achieve individual goals**
 - Where is the Hawken building? (I'm finding my way there)
 - What's the weather like outside? (I'm choosing my clothes)
 - Is Winnifred a good lecturer? (I'm thinking about courses in S2)

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How can we tell that communication is about information processing?

- When people are expecting to make a decision, informative ad is more effective communication than liked music ad (Gorn, 1982)
- Heaps of research shows stupid messages are unconvincing and good messages are more persuasive – under some conditions (!)
 - Including when you are smarter, less fatigued...
- But knowledge of information is poorly correlated with accepting that information, let alone acting on it to achieve goals
 - Global warming
 - Value of studying

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How can we tell that communication is **not only** about information processing?

- We often like communication that is not easily seen as informative
 - Jokes
 - Music
 - We have other motives for communication

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Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after. -- Anne Morrow Lindbergh

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How can we tell that communication is **not only** about information processing?

- We react to the same information differently depending on who says it
 - Courtney's lecture – gender differences in what people say - communication **transmission** – and gender differences in what people infer from a message – communication **reception**
 - Heaps of research shows have differences in communication on group memberships
 - Group memberships are transmitted and received :
 - By who you are – not always controllable (e.g., gender, race)
 - By your signals – non-verbal communication
 - By what you say and don't say – verbal communication

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Stereotyping and race (Revisiting first year!)

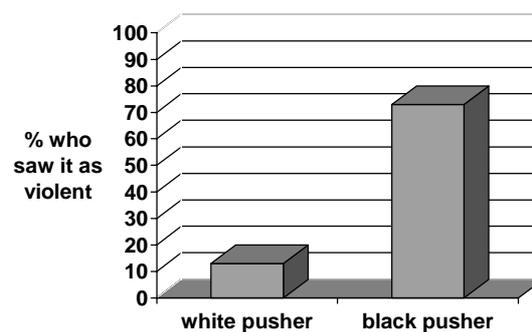
Duncan (1976) had White students observe on TV what they thought was a live conversation between a Black man and a White man.

The conversation degenerated into an argument in which one person lightly shoved the other.

Participants then had to provide their interpretation of the events.

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Duncan (1976)



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Who communicates What, to Whom?

- Depending on source, people interpret same non-verbal communications differently
- And also verbal communications
- Content of message may be **discounted** or **augmented** as infer re why source said it
 - Pro-environmental message -> more persuasion when SOURCE = described as business person vs. Green or AUDIENCE = described as business people vs. Greenies (Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978)
 - Gay rights message more persuasive from straight person than gay person (Maass, Clark & Haberkorn, 1982)

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A new organising principle: Degree of effort in processing

- Sometimes people accept or reject a message without thinking
- Other times they ponder deeply
- “Dual process theories”
 - Heuristic Systematic Model
 - Heuristic (use of cues) vs Systematic processing of content (scrutinize & evaluate arguments and relevant knowledge)

A **heuristic** is a particular technique of directing one's attention in learning, discovery, or problem-solving.

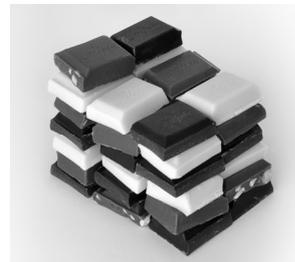
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Low effort processes, e.g.:

- Expertise heuristic
- Likeability heuristic
 - “Your presentation was great!!!”
 - “Chocolate is good for you”



<http://school.discovery.com/clipart/images/presentation-boy.gif>



<http://cache.consumerist.com/images/2006/05/chocolate.jpg>

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Chocolate 'has health benefits'

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4371867.stm> [22 March 2005]

Eating dark chocolate could help control diabetes and blood pressure, Italian experts say. Researchers found eating 100g of dark chocolate each day for 15 days lowered blood pressure in the 15 person-study.

The University of L'Aquila team also found the body's ability to metabolise sugar - a problem for people with diabetes - was improved. But eating the same quantities of white chocolate did not have an effect, the researchers said.

The team said an antioxidant called flavanol was responsible for the effect because it neutralised potentially cell-damaging substances known as oxygen free radicals, the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition reported.

But despite the benefits of dark chocolate, lead researcher Dr Claudio Ferri said people should be careful about chocolate consumption.

"Dark chocolate contains antioxidants, but also a lot of fat and calories.

"People who want to add some chocolate to their diet need to subtract an equivalent amount of calories by cutting back on other foods to avoid weight gain."

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Often times “within-group” variables like expertise and likeability turn out to be based on group membership / stereotypes

- A UK researcher who could speak with a Birmingham accent and “Received Pronunciation” [Standard British accent] lectured to two groups of 17-year-olds about psychology
- The lecturer was rated higher in his “Received Pronunciation” accent in terms of competence, intelligence, and industriousness (!)

Giles & Powesland (1975). *Speech Style and Social Evaluation*.

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More on accents...

Four groups of people were asked to listen to a recording about capital punishment.

– in “Received Pronunciation”; South Wales accent; Somerset accent; Birmingham accent.

- The “received pronunciation” speaker was seen as more competent than the local accent speakers
- The respondents tend to agree more with arguments of the local accent speaker (!)

Giles and Ryan (1982).

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The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it.

-- Edward Murrow

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The group approach

- Early communication research treated group membership as a cue in low-effort processing
 - At low effort **discount** what outgroup members say and **augment** what ingroup says
 - Or at low effort, judge people's communications according to **stereotypes** of the group
 - At high effort process both equally based on strength of arguments communicated
- Some group research also shows low-effort processing of messages based on group membership
 - outgroups' communications are routinely discounted
 - Sometimes they even provoke a backlash!

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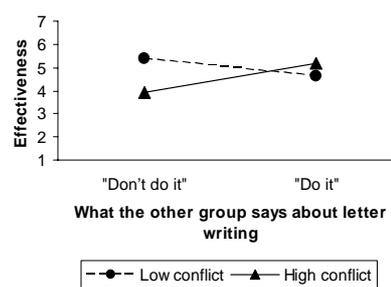
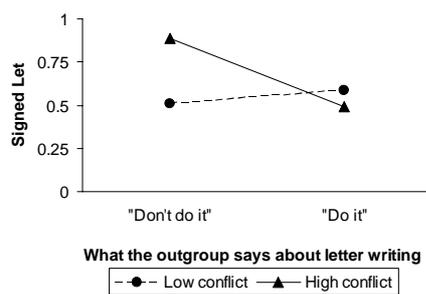
War supporters' and opponents' norms re letter-writing [2003]

1. Self-categorisation as war supporter (49%) or opponent (51%), perceptions of conflict
2. Attitude survey with premeasure re letter-writing:
Writing to a politician about one's views on the war
3. Distractor task
4. "Coding task" with norm manipulations & checks
5. Follow-up measures of attitude, willingness, and action
6. Debriefing



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If you say no I say yes!



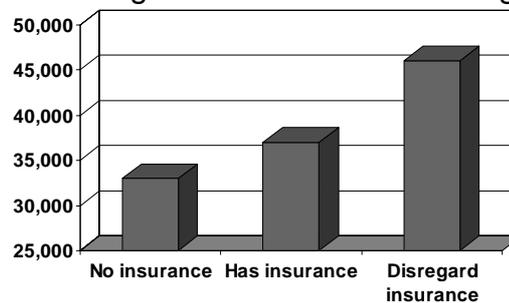
More likely to do what the outgroup says not to do in high conflict

Perceive going against what outgroup says as less effective in high conflict

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Backlash to communication is not only about groups

- Telling someone not to do something can lead to increased action
- **Instructions to disregard** (Broeder, 1959)
 - 30 (US) juries hear case of a woman injured by a careless driver who has no liability insurance, has liability insurance, or has liability insurance but the judge tells them to disregard that info. when setting damages.



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Operation of reactance



Theory of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1972):

- Restricting freedom is aversive, motivates attempts to restore freedom
- As a result, prohibitions increase motivation to engage in action

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The message so far

- Within-group characteristics like expertise & likeability influence reactions to communication
 - the same message is more accepted from likeable & expert sources
- Between-group characteristics impact on communication too
 - e.g., people often infer expertise based on group membership (e.g., accent)
 - Who we see as likeable is also often group-based
- Most group research on communication has been about the heuristic impact of the group

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There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication.... Try the experiment of communicating, with fullness and accuracy, some experience to another, especially if it be somewhat complicated, and you will find your own attitude toward your experience changing.

-- John Dewey

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The powerful effects of outsider status

- The difference heuristic (Terry & Hogg, 1996)
 - what outsiders do & want is irrelevant
- The constructiveness heuristic
 - Outsiders' motives are suspect (Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002)
 - Criticism is dismissed (& disliked)
 - Experience / expertise is dismissed
 - Criticism balanced with praise is liked more but dismissed
- The loyalty heuristic (Hollander, 1964)
 - Insiders who distance themselves from the group are dismissed
- The polarization phenomenon (Louis & Taylor, 2002)
 - Outsider change attempt reinforces current behaviour
 - Rejecting what outsiders want & do affirms us as in control, distinct, & valued

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What triggers group effects on communication?

- Not just having lots of people there – often times stereotypes are applied to individuals in 1 on 1 interactions
- Groovy research by Fiona Barlow
- Sample = 197 UQ Psych 1st years
- 2 x 2 Design: Impact of rejection as a function of race (Aboriginal/White Rejector) and group status (Individual/Group)
- It's hard to make friends @ uni....

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Manipulation

- *Sitting in a small group, however, you notice four Aboriginal students who have a spare seat at their table. You recognise at once that each of the students is clearly Aboriginal, with dark brown skin, and curly hair. The four students seem bright, bubbly, vivacious and friendly. There are two boys and two girls in the group who introduced themselves a couple of weeks ago as John, Simmo, Sarah, and Katie.*
- *As you are sitting alone and there is a spare seat next to Sarah, you decide to move your books and notes to the table that the group are sitting at, and attempt to make friends with Sarah and the others. It would be good to have allies in class, and as John, Simmo, Sarah and Katie seem so personable, you think that they would make a very good group to join.*
- *In the space below please write three (3) topics of conversation that you might use to break the ice with the John, Simmo, Sarah and Katie:*
- *They seem unresponsive... "Please list a couple of things that you might try to get John, Simmo, Sarah and Katie to talk to you:"*

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Rejected!

Again you try to start up a conversation with John, Simmo, Sarah and Katie. The group still does not seem interested.

Until now, Sarah has had her body angled away from yours, and her eyes focused mainly on her notes.

Now Sarah turns herself to you, and says:

"Look, we're really not interested."

She then looks at the others and gets up, gathering up her books and notes. John, Simmo and Katie do the same. They move to another table, on the other side of the room from yours.

You are left sitting alone at your table.

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How anxious would you be in this situation?

NB – for unknown reason the wrong graph appears here – pattern should be Means of 6.5ish, 6.5ish for individual White / Aboriginal and 7.8, 7.2 for group.

- Rejection provokes anxiety, especially rejection by groups
- Only the difference between individual and group rejection is significant
- If anything, rejection by an ingroup is more threatening

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“As part of a separate study” participants complete measures of racism....

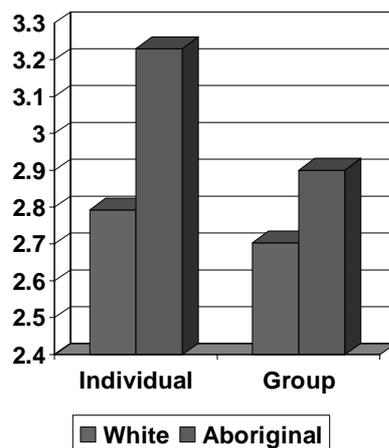
NB – for unknown reason the wrong graph appeared here – pattern should be Means of 3.2, 4ish for individual White / Aboriginal and 3.1 3.2ish for group.

- Rejection by a single Aboriginal Australian increases ‘modern’ racism.
- Only difference between Aboriginal individual & White group approaches significance, $p=.051$

Modern racism items: E.g., “Discrimination against Aboriginal Australians is no longer a problem in Australia”.

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Fiona's study: Rejection and Racism



- Rejection by a single Aboriginal Australian increases 'old-fashioned' racism.
- Only difference between Aboriginal indiv & White group approaches significance, $p=.077$

'Old-fashioned' racism items: E.g., "Aboriginal Australians come from less able races and this explains why they are not as well off as most White/European Australian people".

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The group approach

- All that data supports the idea that group membership can be an important heuristic cue, even in 1 on 1 interactions
 - Sun protection message from teacher vs friend
 - Management message from a male vs female
- Group membership may be especially influential in 1 on 1 interactions
 - in explicit intergroup contexts people try to adjust for activated stereotypes
 - In 1 on 1 interactions, people don't realise they're reacting to stereotypes so they don't control them
- Group membership triggers heuristic processes
 - acceptance (ingroups); dismissal (outgroups "irrelevant"); and/or rejection/reactance (outgroups)
- It also changes the interpretation of the content though
 - Criticism "means" we're bad vs. we need to change

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A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.

-- Rachel Naomi Remen

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The group approach

■ What is the role of groups in **systematic processing of communication**?

- More and more focus on this line of research in 21st c
- Relevance of issue to an important (salient) identity is what **triggers** systematic processing
 - which is when you think deeply about the content of what people say and evaluate the strength & weakness of their arguments

■ Model # 1

- Under accuracy motives group-triggered systematic processing produces decisions that reflect strength of argument
- Under group 'defence' or 'impression' motives can get bias in processing

■ What do we mean by group membership and identity as a trigger to systematic processing?

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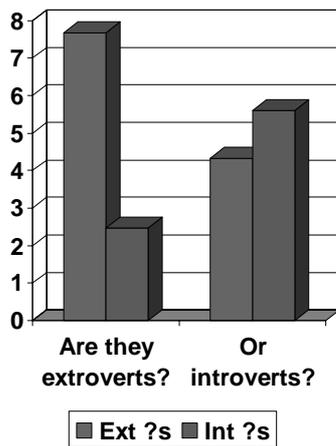
Action: Challenging the views of people from other groups about the intergroup situation in Quebec.

BENEFITS FOR YOU	Impact (0-10)	Probability (0-100%)	BENEFITS FOR YOUR GROUP	Impact (0-10)	Probability (0-100%)
1. opens my horizons	6	80%	1. ↓ prejudices towards people	8	70%
2. learn new things about other cultures	9	70%	2. learn respect	6	70%
3. learn respect	7	60%	3. see other people's POV	7	90%
4. give my opinion & defend it	9	90%	4.		
5.			5.		
COSTS TO YOU	Impact (0-10)	Probability (0-100%)	COSTS TO YOUR GROUP	Impact (0-10)	Probability (0-100%)
1. Don't accept ideas	8	90%	1. Quarrels	8	90%
2. Takes time of studies	7	100%	2. Non-respect	7	75%
3. Take patience (I don't have that)	9	90%	3.		
4.			4.		
5.			5.		

Action: Challenging the views of people from other groups about the intergroup situation in Quebec.

BENEFITS FOR YOU	Impact (0-10)	Probability (0-100%)	BENEFITS FOR YOUR GROUP	Impact (0-10)	Probability (0-100%)
1. none			1.		
2.			2.		
3.			3.		
4.			4.		
5.			5.		
COSTS TO YOU	Impact (0-10)	Probability (0-100%)	COSTS TO YOUR GROUP	Impact (0-10)	Probability (0-100%)
1. waste of my time	10	100	1.		
2. irritating	10	100	2.		
3.			3.		
4.			4.		
5.			5.		

Ok, so people are thinking more deeply about info in groupy contexts when they identify.
What will they do to get more info?



- People asked to test the hypothesis that a student = extrovert vs introvert -> chose **biased questions**
 - “What do you like about parties?” vs “what factors make it hard for you to open up to people?”

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Ok, so people are thinking more deeply about info in groupy contexts when they identify.
What will they do to get more info?

- confirmation bias in combination with group stereotypes
 - **Requests** for info elicit stereotype-congruent information
- Groups of people with biased views who debate a topic often make more stereotyped judgements (Blake McKimmie)
 - Retrieval of stereotype congruent info is advantaged in memory, so **spontaneous expressions** of info are more likely to be stereotype congruent
 - As more and more people express stereotype-congruent information, persuasion occurs
 - As more and more people express stereotype-congruent information, stereotype is more justified / normative
- Point: Deep thought – and systematic processing – are not the answer to group biases in response to communication messages
 - group membership and identity influence heuristic *and* systematic processing.

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If I am to speak ten minutes, I need a week for preparation; if fifteen minutes, three days; if half an hour, two days; if an hour, I am ready now.

-- Woodrow Wilson

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Summary of today's research (1)

- Within-group characteristics like expertise & likeability influence reactions to communication – the same message is more accepted from likeable & expert sources
- Between-group characteristics impact on communication too – e.g., people often infer expertise based on group membership (e.g., accent)
- Most group research has been about the heuristic impact of the group
 - acceptance of ingroup messages vs dismissal vs rejection / reactance to outgroups
 - Research on irrelevance of outgroups
 - Research on defensiveness regarding outgroup criticism
 - Research on group polarization whereby outgroup messages provoke opposite reaction to desired

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Summary of today's research (2)

- Since the 90s though people have become more interested in group context for systematic processing
 - Messages relevant to a salient ingroup are more likely to trigger systematic processing
 - If that systematic processing leads to rejection of the message (e.g., if the content of the message is weak), it's actually better to be an outsider
 - Probably only if acceptance cues (expertise, likeability) are more salient than rejection cues like group membership / defensiveness
- Sometimes people use stereotypes as information in systematic processing
 - Courtney's lecture – choose leaders based on gender stereotypes, among other things
 - When people are debating in groups (e.g., Juries), people often show more influence of shared stereotypes after debating than before, so it's better to have diverse groups to decrease the likelihood of selective information processing

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What does this mean for you?

- “Skills” versus “Identity” approaches to effective communication
 - Learn to say & do the right thing vs learn to be the right person
 - Adaptation of non-verbal and verbal identity signals based on context
- Within-group position
 - status, expertise, likeability
- Between-group position (social identities), especially when conflict is perceived
 - Similarity
 - Language
 - Explicit identity claims

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How can you communicate better? Be strategic about who you are

- Status cues
 - Formality
 - Eye contact
 - Height, gender, race
 - **Confidence**
- Expertise
 - Detail
 - **Confidence**
- Likeability
 - You like *them*
 - Happy expression, energetic tone
 - **Confidence**
- Similarity
 - Body posture
 - Dress
 - Expressed preferences & values
- Language
 - Language speed
 - Slang
- Explicit identity claims
 - Subtle “We”
 - “As a mother, I feel that...”
 - Group-based jokes

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Thank you!

- These PPT slides will be available online at www.psy.uq.edu.au/~wlouis

Some References:

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- Gallois, C., McKay, S., & Pittam, J. (2004). Intergroup Communication and Identity: Intercultural, Health, and Organisational Communication. In K. Fitch & R. Sanders (Eds.), *Handbook of Language and Social Interaction* (pp. 231-250). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
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