The individual within the group

Next week:
Exam Review, Teaching Evaluations,
Q Part 2, Saving the World ...

Circle a number to indicate your response to the following questions ...

To what extent are you conformist?
Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  very much  8  9

To what extent are you easily influenced by the groups to which you belong?
Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  very much  8  9
Circle a number to indicate your response to the following questions ...

To what extent are people in general conformist?
not at all  very much
1          2      3    4    5    6    7    8    9

To what extent are people in general easily influenced by the groups to which they belong?
not at all  very much
1          2      3    4    5    6    7    8    9

Last week:
Cults, brainwashing, & propaganda

• Cults: what are they, why do people join, what effects do they have?
• Brainwashing: what is it, how does it work?
• Propaganda and media bias
The individual within the group

In this week’s lecture we’re going to discuss:
• individualism and collectivism
• need to be different
• need to belong
• strategies for maintaining individual distinctiveness within groups
• third person effect

Cross-cultural values

Different cultures tend to place an emphasis on different values.
To test this in a systematic way, Hofstede (1980) distributed a questionnaire to 117,000 IBM workers in 40 countries from 1967-1973.
Using factor analysis, he isolated four dimensions on which these countries could be compared.
Cross-cultural values

(1) **Power distance**: the degree to which unequal power in institutions is accepted or, alternatively, egalitarianism is endorsed

(2) **Uncertainty avoidance**: planning for stability in dealing with life’s uncertainties (e.g., sticking closely to rules)

(3) **Masculinity-femininity**: valuing traditionally “masculine” traits (e.g., achievement, ambition) or “feminine” traits (harmony, caring)

(4) **Individualism-collectivism**: the extent to which your identity is determined by personal choices or by the collective.

Collectivism

Collectivist cultures are typically characterized by:

- Placing the group’s interests over self-interest
- A focus on one’s inter-relatedness with others
- Emphasis on harmony and loyalty; dissent relatively likely to be seen as immature or dysfunctional
- Relatively sharp intergroup boundaries
Collectivism

One drop of indigo spoils the bucket of milk
(Malay proverb)

If a nail sticks up, hammer it down
(Japanese proverb)

One bad fish spoils the whole basket
(Thai proverb)

If one finger is sore, the whole hand will hurt
(Chinese proverb)

Individualism

Individualist cultures are typically characterized by:
• Focus on individual freedom and achievement
• Ability to join and leave groups depending on whether self-interest is being served
• Portrayal of resistance to group pressure as “heroic”
• Focus on inter-individual competition
Standard advice in individualistic cultures

“Be true to yourself”
“Stand out – be different”
“Don’t let anyone tell you what to do”
“Do what feels right for you”
“March to the beat of your own drum”
“Follow your heart”
“You have the right to be treated as an individual”
“Don’t edit yourself”
Cultureshapes individual behaviour

Nadler (1986) had Israeli participants perform a problem-solving task … they were allowed to seek help from the experimenter if they were “stuck”. Half the participants were raised in a kibbutz (collectivist culture) half were raised in the city (more individualist). Furthermore, half the participants were told that the task was testing individual achievement, and half were told that the task was an intergroup competition.
Culture shapes individual behaviour

Earley (1993) examined effort among Chinese (collectivist) and US (individualist) managers, depending on whether they were working in groups or when they were working alone. Whereas US managers displayed “social loafing”, Chinese managers appeared to display “social compensation”.

Nadler (1986)

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Nadler (1986)
Earley (1993)

Culture shapes individual behaviour

Kim & Markus (1999) made the point that when you ask people from collectivist and individualist cultures about their values, few differences emerge. Differences are more likely to emerge when measures are obtained in a covert and subtle way.

For example Americans and East Asians were offered a pen as reward for filling out a questionnaire. When offered a choice of red or blue pen as a reward for filling out a questionnaire, Americans (but not East Asians) favoured whichever pen was least common.
Culture and advertising

Kim & Markus (1999) also noted how individualist and collectivist values leaked out in advertising. They examined advertising in various magazines in Korea and the US, and coded them depending on whether they emphasized themes of:

- **conformity** (e.g., “we’re working toward building a harmonious society”; “7 out of 10 people use this product”), or
- **uniqueness** (“Choose your own view”; “Inspiration doesn’t keep office hours”; “The internet isn’t for everybody – then again you’re not everybody”).

![Chart showing % using theme by country](chart.png)
Individualism and societal “detachment”

A number of social commentators have noted an increasing tone of individualism (“cult of the individual”) since the 1970s. Putnam (2000), for example, argued that people are becoming increasingly solitary and disengaged with society, the result being increased loneliness and a breakdown of communal values.
Bowling alone

PTA membership down
Club meetings down

Union membership down
Social visits down

Entertaining out of fashion
Family dinners less common

Socializing down
Charity down

Why this increasing disengagement?

Common answers …
- we’re increasingly busy and time-pressured
- movement of women into paid labor force and stresses of 2-career families
- suburbanization and sprawl
- TV and other technologies
- structural changes in economic structure (e.g., globalization, rise of franchises, chain stores)
- increasing divorce rates
- 60s cultural revolt against authority
Need to be different

In their review of the literature, Vignoles et al. (2000) conclude that “a pervasive human motivation exists to see oneself as distinctive, which derives from the importance of distinctiveness for meaningful self-definition”.

Particularly strong in individualist societies since the 1970s ...
To be true to the self, to be assertive, to do what is right for you = mental health and self-actualization.
To submerge the self in order to fulfill group responsibilities or to maintain the peace = weakness, obstacle to personal growth.

Need to be different

Need for a separate identity has been emphasized by a number of prominent humanist and clinical theorists (e.g., Fromm, Horney, Maslow).
Confirmed by Snyder & Fromkin (1980) who showed that if you’re led to believe that there’s 100% overlap between your own personal characteristics and the characteristics of others, people respond with anxiety and a need to increase interpersonal distance.
**Uniqueness**

“The outstanding characteristic of man is his individuality. He is the unique creation of the forces of nature. There was never a person just like him, and there never will be again … individuality is the supreme mark of human nature. All during our waking life, and even in our dreams, we recognize and deal with people as separate, distinct, and unique individuals … In view of the uniqueness of each person's inheritance and environment it could not be otherwise”

Allport, 1961
Uniqueness

“I will not choose what many men desire,
Because I will not jump with common spirits
And rank me with the barbarous multitudes.”
William Shakespeare (The Merchant of Venice)

ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth

Then took the other as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet, knowing how way leads onto way
I doubted if I should ever come back

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads diverged in a wood
And I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference

Robert Frost
Uniqueness

The way to be unique

Being unique is sometimes my aim
Just to avoid being the same
Here are two basic rules
(Ignored only by fools)

First, know the differences
The ones that are not condoned
Second, pursue those differences
Where society lets you alone -anonymous student, 1979

Need to belong

BUT ... we also have a need to belong.

In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow (1968) placed the need to form loving social bonds immediately above the more primitive drives (such as satisfying hunger) but below the need for esteem.

To be ignored—even by strangers—is a highly aversive experience and rejected or lonely people are more likely to experience physical or mental illness than are those for whom relationship needs are fulfilled. This inner drive for intimacy with others is universal, and strongest under conditions of adversity or threat, pointing to the likelihood that belonging has an evolutionary advantage.
Need to belong

This need to belong applies not just to interpersonal relationships, but also to group memberships. Despite all the messages we receive about the importance of standing out from the pack and being ourselves, research on conformity and obedience shows that people are heavily influenced by their own desire to fit in and belong.

Question … How do people balance their needs to belong with their needs to be different?

Balancing needs

There might be at least 5 ways in which people balance their need to belong and their need to be different:

(1) Emphasize *group* distinctiveness
(2) Role differentiation
(3) Seeing self as loyal but not conformist
(4) Joining groups with individualist norms
(5) Seeing the self as more normative than other group members
Emphasizing group distinctiveness

According to optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT; Brewer, 1991), people have countervailing needs for assimilation (or inclusiveness) and differentiation (or distinctiveness).

People seek inclusiveness through group memberships.

Drawing from social identity theory, ODT argues that distinctiveness is achieved by finding groups that are numerically small, unusual, or clearly defined in opposition to other groups.

According to ODT, if the need for inclusion is over-indulged, people will be driven to achieve distinctiveness … and vice versa.

Evidence for ODT

- People tend to show more commitment to and more loyalty to smaller groups than to larger groups (circumstantial evidence)
- Participants who have been primed to feel excessively similar to others
  - (a) gravitate more toward smaller groups than do those who have been primed to feel excessively distinct (Brewer & Pickett, 1999)
  - (b) have heightened perceptions of ingroup and outgroup homogeneity (Pickett & Brewer, 2001, JESP)
  - (c) self-stereotype more (Pickett, Bonner, & Coleman, 2002, JPSP)
  - (d) under-estimate the size of their group (Pickett, Silver, & Brewer, 2002, PSPB)
- The more inclusive participants feel at the university level, the more they identified as members of their faculty area - e.g., maths-science, social science (Hornsey & Hogg, 1999, EJSP)
Evidence for ODT

ODT, then, argues that conformity and group belonging go hand-in-hand – people achieve distinctiveness through conformity. This is particularly likely to be the case the more marginal or distinct from the mainstream the group.

- Jetten et al. (2001, PSPB) found that the more people identified with the body-piercing subgroup, the more they reported that they were striving for distinctiveness from the mainstream and similarity to the subgroup.
- Fortey and Duck (2003) showed that the more teenagers expressed a need for personal distinctiveness, the more they expressed a willingness to conform to the norms of groups that were highly distinct from other groups.

ODT: Summary

In summary, there is circumstantial evidence that the need for distinctiveness can be achieved through (rather than despite of) group membership. This can be achieved by:

- Joining a group that is numerically small
- Joining a group that defines itself against the mainstream
- Subgroup identification
- Perceptually enhancing group distinctiveness

BUT ... Is it possible to achieve individual distinctiveness while at the same time playing the role of being a good group member?
Role differentiation

Group members can achieve some sort of individual recognition by playing a distinctive role within the group… this might be formal (e.g., treasurer) or informal (e.g., “the socio-emotional specialist”, “the office prankster”).

Individual distinctiveness is greatest when you occupy a high status role (e.g., President).

Role identities revolve around one’s interdependence with other group members, and are ultimately directed at servicing the broader group … so distinctiveness is balanced with the knowledge you are being a good group member.

Loyalty without conformity

“Both conformity and resistance to conformity are fundamentally linked to the image of oneself that one wishes to present to others (and undoubtedly also to oneself).” (Codol, 1984)

Hornsey & Jetten (2005) argue that people distinguish between being a conformist group member and being a loyal group member. By seeing the self as both loyal and non-conformist, group members can manage their needs to feel included and individually differentiated.

Hornsey & Jetten asked college students the extent to which they conformed to the norms of the college, and the extent to which they felt other college students conformed. Ratings were also obtained on the extent to which they felt they were loyal to their college.
According to social identity theory, the more you identify with a group the more you conform to the norms of that group. Typically, then, high identifiers are expected to be less individualistic.

But what if the group normatively prescribes individualist behaviour?

This creates the paradoxical situation whereby conformity to group norms can become synonymous with individualist behavior.
Identifying with individualist groups

Jetten et al. (2003) showed that people who strongly identified as “American” described themselves in more individualist terms than did low identifiers.

In a more controlled experimental setting, McAuliffe et al. (2003) led people to believe that their group was characterized by either norms of individualism or norms of collectivism.

They then rated a hypothetical group member who described themselves as either individualist or collectivist.

McAuliffe et al. (2003)

Effect emerged for high identifiers only ... low identifiers not influenced by group norm
Identifying with individualist groups

In a follow-up experiment, McAuliffe et al. (2005) made UQ students believe their group was either characterized by norms of individualism or by norms of collectivism.

Participants then rated a UQ student who was continually taking a dissenting approach in a group discussion on selecting a new UQ logo.

McAuliffe et al. (2005)

Again, effect emerged for high identifiers only ... low identifiers not influenced by group norm
Identifying with individualist groups

Summary …
Compared to low identifiers, people who identify strongly with individualist groups
(a) Describe themselves as more individualist
(b) Evaluate an individualist group member more positively
(c) Evaluate a dissenting group member more positively

Seeing self as more normative than others

“There is only one way to present oneself as different from others without infringing on one’s conformity to social norms and that is by asserting that one is more in conformity with these norms than the others” (Codol, 1975)
Seeing self as more normative than others

Consistent with Codol’s argument, there is a tendency for people to see themselves as more normative than other group members.

For example, where a group is characterized by a norm of cooperativeness, people have a prevailing tendency to view themselves as more cooperative than their colleagues (the “Primus Inter Pares” or “PIP” effect).

Tendency does not seem to be linked to how positive the trait is seen to be, suggesting that this is serving a distinctiveness function (“I’m different”) rather than a self-enhancement function (“I’m better”).

Seeing self as more normative than others

PIP effect may be one way in which people in collectivist cultures can express their individual distinctiveness.

Hornsey & Jetten (2005) asked members of collectivist and individualist cultures the extent to which they were loyal relative to other people in their country.
Collectivists balance need to be different with need to show group loyalty by seeing themselves as more “group-y” than anyone else.
The invisibility of conformity

People in individualistic cultures use creative strategies to either deny they are influenced by groups, or to recast their conformity as an act of personal expression.

In essence, the tendency toward conformity resides within everyone but seems to be recognized only in others!

Third-person effect

In general, people think that negative aspects of the media (e.g., propaganda, violent rap lyrics, pornography) has more of an influence on other people than it does on themselves … the third person effect.

The extent to which people show this bias predicts the extent to which they support censorship.
• Next week:
  ▪ Exam Review
  ▪ Teaching and Course evaluations
  ▪ Q Part 2
  ▪ Saving the World …

• In the Tutes this week:
  ▪ Consultation Assignment 2