Deviance, dissent, and criticism

next week:
Managing Ethnic and Religious Differences

Last week:

• Group socialization (how do groups train newcomers; what can newcomers do to fit in?)
• Strategic behaviour from peripherals
• Initiation ceremonies
• Ostracism
• Links between aggression and rejection
Today’s overview:

- “black sheep”
- impostors
- dissenters
- “groupthink”
- group critics

Black sheep

Sometimes ingroup members reflect badly on the group, whether it be because they are dislikable, incompetent, disloyal, or non-normative. Research shows that ingroup deviates are often rated more harshly than are outgroup members who behave in the same way (“black sheep effect”).
**Black Sheep Effect**

Marques and Yzerbyt (1988) exposed law students to either a good or poor speech from either another law student (ingroup member) or a philosophy student (outgroup member).

![Bar chart showing evaluations of good and poor speeches for ingroup and outgroup members.]

**Black sheep effect**

Khan & Lambert (1998) had people read a conversation between two students.

One of the speakers was represented in either a neutral way or in an unfavourable way (i.e., they were obnoxious).

In some conditions the speaker was male, and sometimes it was female.
Khan & Lambert (1998): neutral condition

Ann: “... so, uh, what’s your major?”
Jim: “I’m majoring in philosophy”
Ann: “Wow! We have a good program in that ... I heard that it can get pretty competitive. How are you doing in there?”
Jim: “Well, so far I’ve been getting Cs and some Bs”
Ann: “Cs and Bs ... hmmm ... have you thought about you getting a tutor to help you out?”
Jim: “No, well, not really”
Ann: “Well you should. They’ll probably show you how to study better and give you some tips and stuff.”
Jim: “Well, I never really thought about it”
Ann: “It’s really easy. You just go to the learning assistance department and tell them what you need and they’ll help you out”

Khan & Lambert (1998): negative condition

In the negative condition, the target (in this case Ann) implies that the other person was not smart enough to succeed in their chosen major (“Cs and Bs ... hmmm ... have you thought about changing your major?”).
Khan & Lambert (1998): male participants

Khan & Lambert (1998): female participants
Branscombe et al. (1993) had people evaluate either a loyal or disloyal fan of either participants’ own sports team (ingroup member) or a rival sports team (outgroup member).

They examined participants’ evaluations of the sports fan among both high and low identifiers.

The typical black sheep effect emerged – but only for high identifiers.

In other words only those for whom the group was an important part of their self-concept showed heightened negativity toward the deviant ingroup member.

**Black Sheep Effect**

High identifiers

Low identifiers

What's going on for low identifiers?
Impostors

Impostors are people who make public claims for an identity, but do not fulfill key criteria for group membership. They are distinguishable from “black sheep” in two ways:

(1) Their claims for group membership are open to contest

(2) They are masqueraders – there’s a gulf between public claims and private behaviour
Impostors: The shape-shifters

Impostors lay claim to an identity to which they don’t belong, cross impermeable boundaries (e.g., of sex, race, ethnicity, nobility).

Traditionally, impostor-ism is used as a way of gaining social advantage … particularly common in a world where opportunities were often denied people due to their social standing.
Impostors: The corner-cutters

Impostors who, in laying claim to an identity to which they don’t belong, cross permeable boundaries.

For these people legitimate entry into the group is possible, but impostor-ism is an easier path.
Impostors: The Trojan horses

An impostor who passes as a member of the outgroup in order to cause it damage.

Includes spies and trolls.
Impostors: The closet dwellers

Impostors who pass as a member of the outgroup in order to avoid stigma or persecution.

Impostors: History thieves

History thieves are those who misrepresent their past in order to position themselves in a community defined by history. Much history theft surrounds major military conflicts (e.g., people passing as Vietnam veterans, or Sept 11 survivors).
Research on impostors

Limited research … research that has been done confirms
(a) Impostors are not well liked
(b) High identifiers are most harsh on impostors
(c) Impostors are judged not so much for their behaviour but rather the gulf between their actions and their claims for behaviour

Hornsey & Jetten (2003) exposed people to a portrait of someone who made either public or private claims to be a vegetarian.
They then assessed how evaluations changed when participants found out that the person ate meat “when they got a craving”.
Hornsey & Jetten (2003)

Negative scores = target seen to be less likeable after finding out they ate meat.

Impostors

“Neely would run around telling people what to do … and the bloke did not have the slightest clue about newspapers and publishing, or anything like that. In that sense, he was the great impostor. Fred didn’t know anything either, but he didn’t really pretend that he did” (cited in Dodd, 2000, p.8).
Why do people resent impostors?

In a follow-up study, Warner et al. (2007) showed gay participants descriptions of people who either claimed to be straight or claimed to be gay. In some conditions the person’s claims were shown to be consistent with their behaviour (non-impostor) whereas in other conditions the person’s claims were shown to be inconsistent with behaviour (e.g., a closeted gay pretending to be straight or a straight person pretending to be gay).

Participants then rated the extent to which the person was seen to be damaging the welfare and reputation of gay people.

Warner et al. (2007)
Warner et al. (2007)

Why are impostors seen to be damaging? Depends on who it is … Gay people pretending to be straight were seen to be damaging because they were expressing shame regarding their minority group membership. Straight people pretending to be gay were seen to be damaging because they were blurring the distinctiveness of gay people relative to straights.

Subjective impostors

People who may attract the accusations of impostorism, but do not conform to the strict definition of being an impostor. For these people, accusations of impostorism are not objectively verifiable, but rather represent a value judgement, a suspicion, a political weapon, or a hunch.
Subjective impostors: Peripherals

Depending on how tightly perceivers draw the circle of group membership, people who lie on the margins of group membership can be seen as respected members of the “broad church” or as fraudulent impostors who have no legitimate claim to group membership.

Particularly the case when people straddle two group memberships (e.g., bissexuals; children of mixed descent).

Subjective impostors: Traitors

People who publicly represent themselves as members of the group, but endorse attitudes or behaviours that the perceiver believes are hostile to the group’s genuine values or goals.

Their superficial claims for group identity might be incontestable, but their deeper values are seen to be so anti-group that it justifies the word “impostor”, often synonymous with the word “traitor”.

Subjective impostors: 
Claytons

A person who superficially possesses the characteristics of a group, but on a deeper level is perceived to have little in common with other group members. Their claim for group membership might be difficult to dispute (as opposed to peripherals) and their values might not be seen to be explicitly hostile to the interests of the group (as opposed to the traitors). But their claims for group membership might be seen to be skin-deep, with the suspicion that their deeper cultural values have more in common with relevant outgroups (e.g., “coconuts”; “bananas”).

Subjective impostors: 
Parasites

People who express all the attitudes and behaviours that one might expect of a group, but the perceiver suspects that they have selfish and individualistic motives for doing so.
Feeling like an impostor

Research shows that whereas some people blatantly act as impostors for social gain, most people have secret fears that their reputation exceeds their abilities … in essence, that they’re impostors!

The belief that you’re an impostor is especially rife in academia, and among female professionals.

Feeling like an impostor

Clance and Imes (1978) found that many high-achieving women seemed unable to internalize their accomplishments. External proof of intelligence and ability in the form of academic excellence, degrees, recognition, promotions and the like were routinely dismissed. Instead, success was attributed to contacts, luck, timing, perseverance, personality or otherwise having “fooled” others into thinking they were smarter and more capable than these women "knew" themselves to be.

Rather than offering assurance, each new achievement and subsequent challenge only served to intensify the ever-present fear of being found out … the impostor phenomenon.
Feeling like an impostor

What makes one prone to the impostor phenomenon? Clance proposed four key developmental elements:
(a) as children impostors learn they are not typical for their backgrounds,
(b) they receive feedback from others, especially teachers, that indicates they are very capable children,
(c) the family may not recognise the child's manifest capabilities, and
(d) the family conveys the message that cleverness or success should come with little effort.

Feeling like an impostor

Correlational studies have shown that the feeling of being an impostor is related to:
• Self-reported depression
• Anxiety
• Low self-esteem
• Self-consciousness
• Fear of success

Early research was influenced by feminist theory, but only limited evidence that women feel it more than men.
Feeling like an impostor

Feeling like an impostor can also occur when people attribute positive qualities to you that you don’t feel you can live up to:

“I actually was crumbling under that so-called banner of 'strength in the face of adversity'. People just thought that I had this fighting spirit in me, and I never felt that...that I did. So, I felt like an impostor, really.”
Victoria Friend
Dissenters

Another type of deviant is the dissenter – the person who raises divergent viewpoints in group discussion. There’s a convergence of evidence that dissenters are not well liked and face a lot of pressure to conform to the group.
Dissenters

What happens when people don’t conform to the group position in a small group discussion?

Schachter (1951) had people take part in a group discussion. In each group, the experimenter planted a confederate, who was told to either:

1. agree with the group
2. disagree at first, then agree (a “slider”)
3. disagree the whole time (a “deviate”)

> the person who agreed all the time received little attention
> the slider received a lot of social pressure until he conformed
> the deviate gained more and more negative attention over time.

Schachter (1951)

Number of communications

Number of communications

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Schachter (1951)

Why do groups like harmony?

According to Festinger (1950, 1954) there are at least two major reasons:

(1) Group locomotion (unanimity is desirable because it helps achieve our goals)
(2) Social reality (reference groups give us certainty and a sense of what our world is like … dissent shatters this).
Negative consequences of crushing dissent

One problem with crushing dissent is that sometimes dissent is valuable in decision-making. A number of studies has shown that unanimity creates more harmonious and cohesive groups, but that dissent produces more creative thinking and better outcomes. Indeed, all an experimenter needs to do to improve decision-making in laboratory groups is to establish a norm of dissent and critical thinking (Postmes et al., 2001).
**Need for cognitive closure**

Kruglanski & Webster (1991) argue that there is a third reason why groups look for unanimity ... that sometimes the sheer energy required to discuss and process divergent opinion becomes too much and people just feel the need to have some kind of closure.

According to this argument, dissent is more likely to be indulged when a group is relaxed and under little pressure, but when a group is under pressure a momentum builds for a clear decision to be made.

**Kruglanski & Webster (1991)**

In support of their argument, Kruglanski & Webster (1991) showed that deviates in a group faced more rejection

(a) when the group was facing a deadline, &

(b) when the group discussion was carried out in a noisy versus a quiet environment

They argued that in each case the costs associated with taking into account dissenting ideas increases and so dissenting views are rejected – regardless of the objective merits of the argument.
GROUPTHINK

An example of pressure leading to a rejection of dissent?

Groupthink: A mode of thinking in highly cohesive groups in which the desire to reach unanimous agreement overrides the motivation to adopt proper, rational decision-making procedures.

Irving Janis (1972, 1982) examined many real-world examples of fiascos and disastrous decisions (e.g. Bay of Pigs fiasco, Challenger disaster) and found there to be common elements.

These symptoms were characterized as “groupthink”.

ANTECEDENTS

- excessive cohesiveness
- insulation of group from outside
- lack of impartial leadership
- ideological homogeneity
- high stress from external threat

SYMPTOMS

- feelings of invulnerability
- feelings of unanimity
- belief that group must be right
- information contrary to group’s position ignored or discredited
- dissidents pressured into conforming

poor decision-making
Dissent and groupthink

Dissent can be discouraged through at least four mechanisms:
(1) Fear of damaging reputation
(2) Active pressure from “mind guards”
(3) Use of humour
(4) Too much cohesion within the group

Fear of damaging reputation …

“In the months after the Bay of Pigs I bitterly reproached myself for having kept so silent during those crucial discussions in the Cabinet Room, though my feelings of guilt were tempered by the knowledge that a course of objection would have accomplished little save to gain me a name as a nuisance. I can only explain my failure to do more than raise a few timid questions by reporting that one’s impulse to blow the whistle on this nonsense was simply undone by the circumstances of the discussion.”
Active pressure from “mind guards” …

Robert Kennedy to a member of the group who was getting cold feet …

“You may be right or you may be wrong, but the President has made his mind up. Don’t push it any further. Now is the time for everyone to help him all they can.”

Use of humour …

Admiral to lieutenant after losing air contact with Japanese aircraft carriers, immediately before Pearl Harbour:

(Joking and laughing) “What, you don’t know where the carriers are? Do you mean to say they could be rounding Honolulu and you wouldn’t know it?”

Having relegated the Japanese threat to the category of laughing matters, the admiral was making it clear, though in an indirect way, that he’d be inclined to laugh derisively at anyone who thought otherwise
CO-PILOT (cautiously): Isn’t this a little faster than you normally fly this, John?
CAPTAIN (confidently): Oh yeah, but it’s nice and smooth. We’re going to get in right on time. Maybe a little ahead of time. We’ve got it made.
CO-PILOT (uncertainly): I sure hope so.
ENGINEER: You know, John, do you know the difference between a duck and a co-pilot?
CAPTAIN: What’s the difference?
ENGINEER: Well, a duck can fly!
CAPTAIN: Well said!
(Pause of several seconds)
CO-PILOT (anxiously): Seems like there’s a bit of a tailwind up here, John.
CAPTAIN: Yeah, we’re saving gas – helps us to get in a couple of minutes early too.
(another pause)
CO-PILOT: John, we’re a little below the MDA here.
CAPTAIN: Yeah, well we’ll take care of it here.

Too much cohesion …

Analysis of the decision to escalate the Vietnam war:

“The men of the Cabinet were loyal to each other, with a devotion compounded of mutual respect and common adversity. They soon learned, as all congenial committeemen learn, to listen selectively and to talk harmoniously even when in disagreement. Familiarity with one another’s minds became an asset as well as a handicap”

“One of the significant problems was that the men who handled national security affairs became too close, too personally fond of each other. They tended to conduct the affairs of state almost as if they were a gentleman’s club … So you often dance around the final hard decision which would set you against men who are very close to you, and you tend to reach consensus.”
Reactions to group critics

Problem:

Criticism of one’s group can be good

- acts as a catalyst for growth and change
- brings unrecognized problems to light
- can expose group members to alternative standpoints and options
- can lead to the reassessment of ill-adaptive behaviours, attitudes and policies.

“Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.”

The question is: when will criticism be taken in a constructive way, and when will it be taken in negative, defensive way?
Reactions to group critics

Hornsey et al. (2002) had participants read what they believed was an extract from an interview in which somebody said either positive or negative things about Australians.

These comments were attributed to either another Australian (ingroup member) or to somebody from overseas (an outgroup member).

Positive comments

“Australians are generally fairly friendly and warm people. I also believe they’re generally a very educated society. But the characteristic I’ve noticed most about Australians is that on the whole they seem to have a very good sense of humour. They can laugh at themselves and see the funny side to things and I like that.”
Negative comments

“When I think of Australians I think of them as being fairly racist; they’re racist towards Indigenous Australians and they’re intolerant of Asians. I also don’t think that they’re as cultured as some other societies.”

Hornsey et al. (2002)
Criticism of maths-science students

Name: S. Mason
Age: 23
Faculty: Social-Science or Maths-science student (depending on condition)

“My general perception of maths-science students is that they’re too conformist, and they don’t have a very strong sense of social conscience. Also, they can tend toward being a bit arrogant.”

NEGATIVITY TOWARD COMMENTS

To what extent do you think the speaker’s comments were:

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AGREEMENT

To what extent do you agree with the speaker’s comments?

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To what extent do you think the speaker’s comments are true?

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Hornsey et al. (2002)

Intergroup sensitivity effect

INTERGROUP SENSITIVITY EFFECT

Characterized by …

(a) strong defensiveness in the face of outgroup criticisms

&

(b) surprisingly high levels of tolerance toward ingroup criticisms
The intergroup sensitivity effect

Australians
(Hornsey & Imani, 2004)

Maths-science students
(Hornsey et al., 2002)

The intergroup sensitivity effect

University students
(Hornsey et al., 2002; Elder et al., 2005)

Queenslanders
(Hornsey et al., 2005)

Allied health professionals
(Hornsey et al., 2007)

Schools
(O'Dwyer et al., 2002)

Muslims
(Ariyanto et al., 2006)
CREDENTIALIALING

Can outsiders reduce defensiveness by demonstrating how much experience they have with the group they're criticizing?

No evidence for this – giving outsiders experience with the target group doesn’t help them (Hornsey & Imani, 2004, PSPB)
SEEKING SOCIAL SUPPORT

Can outsiders reduce defensiveness by demonstrating that other people also share their view?

No evidence for this – ingroup members were just as defensive in the face of criticism shared by 3 independent sources as from one isolated critic (Esposo & Hornsey, unpublished data).
SPOTLIGHTING

Can outsiders reduce defensiveness by making it explicit that they intend the comments to apply only to a subset of the group membership ... not the entire group?

No evidence for this – spotlighting had no effect at all
(Hornsey, Robson, Smith, & Esposo, 2008, Human Communication Research)
SWEETENING

Can outsiders reduce defensiveness by attaching praise to the criticism?

Mixed Results ...

Likeability: it helps a lot
Agreement: it helps a little
Negativity: it doesn't help at all

(Hornsey, Robson, Smith, & Esposo, 2008, Human Communication Research)
**Why are all these strategies failing?**

... because they’re missing the point about what’s causing defensiveness in the first place.

*Attributional explanation:* outsiders are attributed relatively destructive motives for their comments, whereas insiders are attributed relatively constructive motives.

It is this attributional bias that mediates the ISE

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**Implications for outgroup critics**

To be listened to in an open-minded way, it’s not enough for outgroup critics to be knowledgeable, experienced, or even right …

The important thing is that they need to defuse the expectation that they are motivated by destructive reasons.

*It’s the struggle to define the critic’s underlying attitudes and values – rather than the integrity of the criticisms themselves – that might be most crucial in determining a critic’s impact.*
Overcoming the intergroup sensitivity effect

Evidence that the ISE can be overcome if:

1. The outgroup member uses inclusive language that locates them as a member of a shared superordinate ingroup (Hornsey et al., 2004, EJSP)

2. The outgroup member acknowledges failings of their own group at the same time as criticizing the group (Hornsey et al., 2008, HCR)

Implications for ingroup critics

Essential to advertise one’s “groupy” credentials before (or while) engaging in criticism of the group.

Evidence that the advantage given to ingroup critics disappears if ...

- the ingroup critic is a low identifier
- the ingroup critic is a newcomer to the group
• Next week in lecture:
  Managing ethnic and religious differences

• In the Tutes this week:
  - Intro to research & lit review; Review of common errors in A1 from last year

• Next week – in the tutes:
  - Introductions