

Short Note

**The black sheep effect: Judgmental extremity towards ingroup members in inter- and intra-group situations**

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*Abstract*

*Two experiments yielded further evidence for the black sheep effect (Marques, Yzerbyt and Leyens, 1988). In the first experiment, 66 subjects were presented with two good or two poor speeches, one supposedly made by an ingroup member and the other supposedly made by an outgroup member. In the second experiment, 37 subjects were presented with one good and one poor speech supposedly made either by two ingroup members or by two outgroup members. The black sheep effect was predicted and found in both experiments: subjects over-evaluated likeable ingroup members and under-evaluated unlikeable ingroup members as compared to equally likeable and unlikeable outgroup members. Collapsing the data of the two experiments suggests that social comparison may be performed, in purely symbolic terms, against a cognitive standard of positivity rather than an outgroup present in the judgmental situation. The emergence of the predicted effect when strongly individualized information was presented in inter- as well as in intra-group situations supports the robustness of the black sheep effect.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Maybe because Social Identity Theory fleshed out of the cognitive postulate of intra-category assimilation and inter-category differentiation (Tajfel and Wilkes, 1963), research in this domain has seldom examined the effects of within-group differences on group judgments. The classical version of the minimal group paradigm (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy and Flament, 1971) is the clearest example of the creation of a complete indifferentiation between ingroup members and between outgroup members. Conse-

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quently, subjects judge others solely on the basis of their known group memberships. A main result of this line of research has been the emergence of a global evaluative bias towards the ingroups.

In a preceding paper, Marques, Yzerbyt and Leyens (1988) proposed that inter-group differentiation and ingroup favouritism may coexist with an intra-group differentiation. Given this phenomena, likeable ingroup members will be more positively evaluated than likeable outgroup members. Simultaneously, unlikeable ingroup members will be evaluated more negatively than unlikeable outgroup members. This joint occurrence of ingroup bias and ingroup derogation was dubbed the *black sheep effect*. The concomitant emergence of an ingroup bias for desirable members and of an ingroup derogation for undesirable members was viewed as a manifestation of ingroup favouritism: downgrading unlikeable ingroupers may be a cognitive strategy aimed at preserving the group's sense of positivity as a whole.

In one experiment (Marques *et al.* 1988, Expt. 1), we had our subjects rate 'likeable' versus 'unlikeable' ingroup and outgroup members on a set of positive and negative trait-descriptors previously known to be equally typical of the ingroup and outgroup. It was predicted and found that ratings of likeable ingroup members were more positive than ratings of equally likeable outgroup members, and that ratings of unlikeable ingroup members were more negative than ratings of unlikeable outgroup members.

In a second study (Marques *et al.*, 1988, Expt. 2), subjects were asked to evaluate ingroup and outgroup members who were shortly described either as conforming to (likeable condition) or as opposing (unlikeable condition) a norm which was either exclusive of the ingroup or which applied equally to the ingroup and to the outgroup. The data showed that the black sheep effect emerged only for the exclusive norm. In the other case, ratings were equally negative or equally positive for ingroup and outgroup targets.

In a third experiment (Marques *et al.*, 1988, Expt. 3), we showed that the black sheep effect emerged regardless of the subjects' differential levels of information about the stimulus-domain according to which ingroup and outgroup targets were judged.

In light of the above results, we speculated that the black sheep effect arises as a function of a comparison of the judgmental targets to ingroup standards of positivity which serve as criteria for the definition of social identity (*cf.* Marques, in preparation). Such standards, we proposed, may allow social comparison to operate in a purely symbolic way which excludes the need for the objective presence of the outgroup in the judgmental setting, as is the case in the minimal group paradigm. However, the procedure we used in our experiments suffers from three apparent flaws. First, our subjects were presented with a poor description of the targets and were asked to rate these targets along a series of traits. It is not sure that, if provided richer, more vivid and more individualized information, the subjects would provide similar judgments. Second, these studies employed full between-subjects designs which may have excluded any form of social comparison from the judgmental setting. It is not sure that the subjects' judgments could be replicated in an inter-group setting. Finally, if, as we suggested, the subjects do engage in a purely symbolic social comparison process, then we should be able to replicate these results by using both an inter-group setting and an intra-group setting. The following two experiments were designed to check for these issues.

In Experiment 1, subjects were presented with an ingroup and an outgroup speaker and were then asked to evaluate their respective speech performances. Under one condition, both speakers performed well, whereas under the other both performed poorly. In Experiment 2, subjects were to rate either two ingroup or two outgroup speakers; whereas one speaker performed well, the other speaker performed poorly. Both experiments used

the same materials. The designs differed only from each other in that group membership and speech performance were either between- and within-subjects factors or *vice versa*. Because we predict that the black sheep effect should emerge also for individualized information and as a function of a social comparison process independent of the actual presence of the comparison-target in the judgemental situation, we hypothesize its emergence in both studies.

## EXPERIMENT 1

### Method

#### *Subjects*

Forty-seven male and 51 female law undergraduates of the Catholic University of Louvain, aged 18 to 21, volunteered to participate in an experiment.

#### *Procedure*

Subjects were presented with two tape-recorded speeches lasting about 3 minutes and with a booklet containing written instructions and questions. Each speech was composed of two small texts in different styles (Michaux, 1963; Sarraute, 1980), and was read by one of two speakers. Thirty-four males and 32 females were told that the study was part of research comparing the discursive ability of law students and philosophy students (the experimental group). Thirteen males and 19 females were just told that the research aimed at comparing several person's discursive abilities (the control group). The experiment was run in two sessions with the purpose of counter-balancing the order of presentation of the speeches. In each session, prior to listening to the speeches, one third of the subjects read that the first speech was that of a law student and that the second one was that of philosophy student. Another third was told the reverse. The last third was the control group. In the experimental group, 35 subjects were presented with one order and 31 were presented with another. In the control group, 21 subjects were presented with one order and 11 with the other. Once the speeches had been listened to, the subjects were to answer seven questions.

#### *Dependent measures*

The questions were: (1) 'In your opinion, this speech was . . .' (endpoints: 1=poor; 7=good); (2) 'What is your global impression of this person?' (1=unfavourable; 7=favourable); (3) 'In your opinion, this person's capability to express ideas is . . .' (1=weak; 7=strong); (5) 'In your opinion, this person's capability to capture the audience is . . .' (1=weak; 7=strong); (6) 'In your opinion, what is the average discursive ability of law students?' (1=weak; 7=strong); (7) 'In your opinion, what is the average discursive ability of philosophy students?' (1=weak; 7=strong).

### Results

#### *Item homogeneity*

The Cronbach's alpha scores of the five items asking for direct evaluations of the speakers ranged between 0.88 and 0.95 for control group subjects. Given this level of reliability, we summed and averaged these items' scores in each experimental situation.

#### *Speech checks*

Results of a 3-way ANOVA on speech performance (good versus poor), speaker (Speaker A and Speaker B) and order of presentation, yielded a significant main effect for speech performance, with the good speech being more positively evaluated than the poor speech

( $M = 3.83$ , and  $M = 2.75$ , respectively,  $F(1,28) = 12.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Because no other significant effects emerged, we pooled the speakers together in the experimental group's data analysis. Also, the lack of other significant effects allow to consider any emerging significant interaction in the experimental group as being due to the speaker's label and speech performance.

#### *Ingroup favouritism*

A 2 (good versus poor)  $\times$  2 (ingroup versus outgroup) ANOVA was computed on the scores of items 6-7 in the experimental group, with group membership as a within-subjects factor. A marginally significant effect emerged for speech performance,  $F(1,64) = 3.07$ ,  $p < 0.10$ , and a significant main effect emerged for group membership,  $F(1,64) = 3.98$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . As expected, a positivity bias emerged for the ingroup ( $M = 4.11$ , and  $M = 3.89$ , respectively for the ingroup and the outgroup). The interaction was not significant.

#### *The black sheep effect*

A 2-way ANOVA, computed on the global evaluations of items 1-5 in the experimental group, yielded a significant main effect for speech performance,  $F(1,64) = 52.88$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , ( $M = 4.53$  and  $M = 2.95$  for the good and the bad speech, respectively). The group membership effect was not significant,  $F(1,64) = 0.55$ , *n.s.*, but the speech performance  $\times$  group membership interaction was significant,  $F(1,64) = 5.39$ ,  $p < 0.03$  (see Table 1).

## EXPERIMENT 2

### **Method**

#### *Subjects*

Twenty male and 22 female law undergraduates of the Catholic University of Louvain volunteered to participate. Five subjects were discarded for non-compliance with the experimental instructions.

#### *Procedure*

The procedure is similar to the one used in Experiment 1 except for three differences. First, no control group was included. Second, no reference was made either to philosophy students in the ingroup condition or to law students in the outgroup students except in items 6-7 which were presented after completion of the questionnaire. Finally, each subject listened to a good and a bad speech in counter-balanced order. Dependent measures were the same as in Experiment 1.

### **Results**

#### *Item homogeneity*

As indexed by Cronbach's alpha, the average internal consistency of items 1-5 across stimuli and conditions is 0.93. The five items were thus pooled in a single dependent measure.

#### *Ingroup favouritism*

A one-way ANOVA with two levels for group membership was computed on the scores of items 6-7 and yielded a significant effect,  $F(1,36) = 6.73$ ,  $p < 0.02$  ( $M = 4.49$  and  $M = 4.14$  for ingroup and outgroup respectively).

#### *The black sheep effect*

A 2-way ANOVA on the global evaluations of the speakers yielded a significant effect for speech performance,  $F(1,35) = 233.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$  ( $M = 5.15$  and  $M = 2.15$  for the good and

Table 1. Global evaluations of speakers as a function of speech performance and group membership

Good membership		Performance	
		Good	Poor
Ingroup	Mean	4.79	2.82
	<i>S.D.</i>	1.16	1.01
Outgroup	Mean	4.28	3.08
	<i>S.D.</i>	1.17	1.07

Speech performance is a between-subjects factor ( $n=26$  and  $n=40$ , respectively for good and for poor speeches) and group membership is a within subjects factor.

Ratings were done on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (= negative) to 7 (= positive).

the poor speech respectively), no main effect for group membership,  $F(1,35) < 1$ , and a significant speech performance  $\times$  group membership interaction,  $F(1,35) = 4.68, p < 0.04$  (see Table 2).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Results of the two experiments consistently showed that ingroup members may be judged more extremely than similar outgroup members, both in inter- and intra-group situations, and that this phenomenon is associated with ingroup favouritism. Further, the black sheep effect emerged also in situations providing highly personalized information about the judgmental targets. Therefore, the present results may be seen as supportive of the assumption that under-rating or over-rating evaluatively salient ingroup members is aimed at preserving the perceived positivity of the ingroup as a whole. Also, the black sheep effect occurred in three types of social comparison situations: judgments of only one ingroup or outgroup target, judgments of one ingroup as compared to an outgroup target, and judgments of two ingroup or of two outgroup targets. This suggests that social comparison may be a purely symbolic process in which individual group members are matched against a cognitive value dimension. Further research is needed to articulate the role of internal standards in the dynamics of inter- and intra-group relations.

Table 2. Global evaluations of speakers as a function of group membership and speech performance

Performance		Group membership	
		Ingroup	Outgroup
Good	Mean	5.46	4.86
	<i>S.D.</i>	0.98	1.23
Poor	Mean	2.01	2.27
	<i>S.D.</i>	0.73	0.83

Group membership is a between-subjects factor ( $n=18$  and  $n=19$ , respectively for ingroup and for outgroup targets) and speech performance is a within-subjects factor.

Ratings were done on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (= negative) to 7 (= positive).

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## RÉSUMÉ

Deux nouvelles expériences ont confirmé le "black sheep effect" (l'effet brebis galeuse) (Marques, Yzerbyt et Leyens, 1988). Dans la première expérience, 66 sujets ont écouté les discours de deux bons ou de deux mauvais orateurs, l'un supposé membre de l'ingroup et l'autre supposé membre de l'outgroup. Dans la seconde expérience, 37 sujets ont écouté un bon et un mauvais orateur présentés soit comme membres de l'ingroup, soit comme membres de l'outgroup. La prédiction du black sheep effect s'est avérée exacte dans les deux expériences: les sujets ont sur-évalué les bons membres de l'ingroup et sous-évalué les mauvais membres de l'ingroup relativement aux bons et aux mauvais membres de l'outgroup. Ensemble, les données de ces deux expériences suggèrent qu'une comparaison sociale est effectuée, sur un plan purement symbolique, par rapport à un standard cognitif de positivité plutôt que par rapport à un outgroup présent dans la situation de jugement. L'émergence de l'effet lorsque l'on présente de l'information fortement individualisée tant dans une situation inter-groupale que dans une situation intra-groupale souligne la robustesse du black sheep effect.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Zwei Experimente erbrachten weitere Belege des Black-Sheep-Effekts (Marques, Yzerbyt und Leyens 1987). Im ersten Experiment wurden 66 Vpn zwei gute und zwei schlechte Ansprachen vorgelegt, eine angeblich von einem ingroup Mitglied gehalten, die anderen von einem outgroup Mitglied. Im zweiten Experiment erfolgte die Darstellung einer guten und einer schlechten Ansprache (33 Vpn), die angeblich entweder von zwei ingroup oder zwei outgroup Mitgliedern stammen. Der Black-Sheep-Effekt wurde für beide Experimente vorausgesagt und gefunden: Die Vpn überbewerteten sympathische ingroup Mitglieder und unterbewerteten unsympathische ingroup Mitglieder in Vergleich zu gleich sympathischen outgroup Mitgliedern. Die Zusammenfassung der Daten beider Experimente legt nahe, daß ein sozialer Vergleich in rein symbolischen Termen gegen einen kognitiven Standard der Positivität erfolgt eher als einer outgroup, die in einer Beurteilungssituation verfügbar ist. Das Auftreten des vorhergesagten Effekts in Intergruppen- und Intragruppensituationen, in denen individuumsbezogene Informationen vorgelegt wurden, bestätigt die Robustheit des Black-Sheep-Effekts.

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