

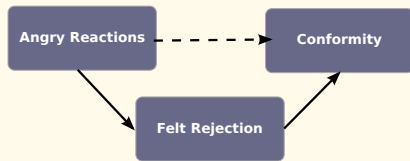
Angry Reactions and Social Influence: How many for how much?

Marc W. Heerdink, Gerben A. van Kleef, Astrid C. Homan, & Agneta H. Fischer

Background

When group members deviate from the group norm, other group members frequently express negative emotions about this deviance.

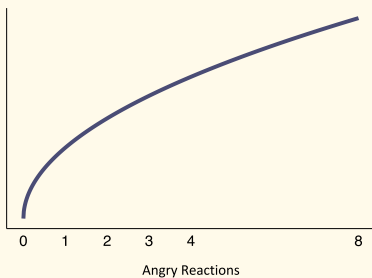
From previous research (Heerdink et al., 2013), we know that when a majority expresses anger about deviance, the deviant a) feels rejected, and b) therefore conforms if s/he is sufficiently motivated to remain in the group:



However, not all majority members will always respond with the same emotional reaction. So how does the number of angry reactions impact the deviant individual?

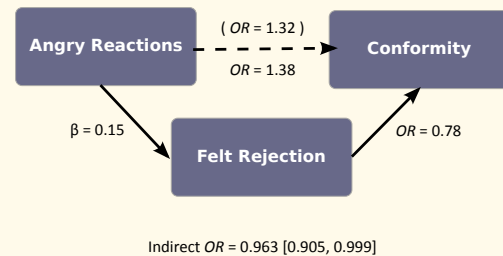
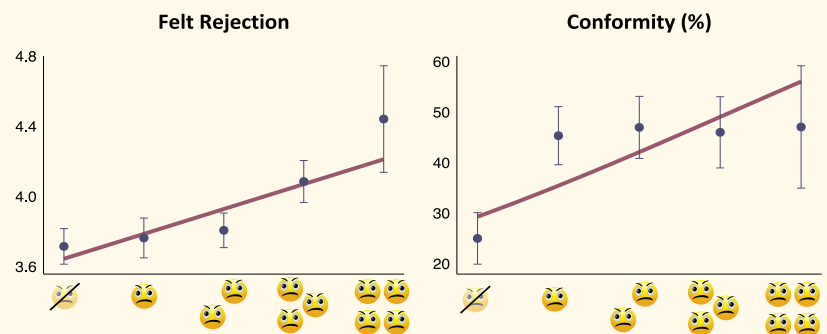
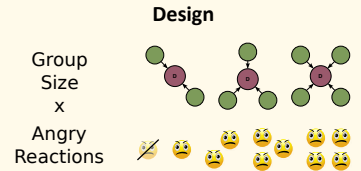
Social Impact Theory (Latané, 1981) predicts a mathematical relation between the number of influence sources and their impact ($I = sN^1$). Therefore, we expected this relation between the number of angry reactions, felt rejection, and influence:

Felt Rejection / Conformity



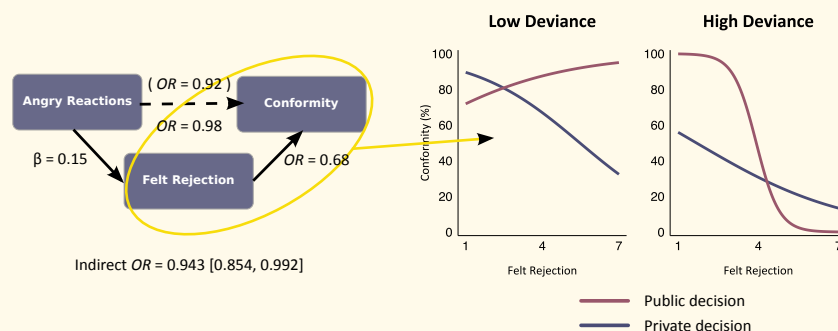
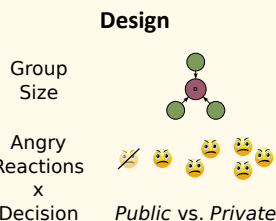
Study 1

We set up a simulated group discussion ($N = 280$) about the type of literature (books or journal articles) that students wanted to use during their study. The group norm was manipulated to be the opposite of the participant's opinion.



Study 2

We wanted to increase the normative pressure in the situation to see whether that would result in a positive association between feeling rejected and conformity. In the same paradigm ($N = 217$), we added a manipulation of whether the final decision was public or private (i.e., a vote).



Conclusions

In two studies, we found that felt rejection increases as the number of angry reactions increases. Social Impact Theory did not provide a better fit to the data than the simpler linear model.

An increase in felt rejection *reduced* the chance of conformity (indirect effect).

However, the findings are also consistent with previous work (Romero-Canyas et al., 2010; Heerdink et al., 2013) that shows that feeling rejected may *increase* conformity if there is sufficient normative pressure in the situation.

Finally, Study 1 suggests that angry expressions may increase informational influence as well.

References / Further Reading:

- DeWall, C. N., Twenge, J. M., Bushman, B., Im, C., & Williams, K. D. (2010). A little acceptance goes a long way: Applying social impact theory to the rejection-aggression link. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1(2), 168–174.
- Heerdink, M. W., van Kleef, G. A., Homan, A. C., & Fischer, A. H. (2013). On the social influence of emotions in groups: Interpersonal effects of anger and happiness on conformity versus deviance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 105(2), 262–284.
- Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American Psychologist*, 36(4), 343–356.
- Romero-Canyas, R., Downey, G., Reddy, K. S., Rodriguez, S., Cavanaugh, T. J., & Pelayo, R. (2010). Paying to belong: When does rejection trigger ingratiation? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(5), 802–823.
- Van Kleef, G. A., van Doorn, E. A., Heerdink, M. W., & Koning, L. F. (2011). Emotion is for influence. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 22(1), 114–163.

