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The effect of Difference Oriented Communication on the subjective validity of
an in-group norm: DOC can treat the group.

Daniel Frings¹ and Dominic Abrams²

¹ London South Bank University, UK

² University of Kent, UK

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Please address all correspondence to the first author at: Department of Psychology, London South Bank University, London, UK, SE1 6LN.

Email: fringsd@lsbu.ac.uk: Tel: +4420278155888

The subjective group dynamics model predicts that in-group deviants who violate in-group norms that differentiate between the in-group and the out-group threaten the in-group's public image and its sense of validity. Previous research has shown that, in order to reduce this threat, group members attempt to symbolically marginalize in-group deviants through negative evaluation. In the current study ($N = 107$), the effect of another form of symbolic marginalization (difference oriented communication) is investigated. The findings support the subjective group dynamics model by showing that group members whose communications to deviants highlighted differences experienced a subsequent increase in subjective validity of in-group norms.

KEYWORDS: communication, deviance, social identity, in-group

Deviant in-group members are those whose conduct departs from group-specific behavioral and attitudinal norms that sustain the subjective validity of the in-group (Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Henson, 2000) . Subjective validity, the conviction that the in-group is 'right' (cf. Festinger, 1954) and hence sustain positive social identity reality for group members. A variety of responses to in-group deviance have been observed. Research on the black sheep effect (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988) shows that failure to meet normative standards leads to greater derogation when actors are members of an in-group, as opposed to an out-group.

Derogation of in-group deviants may protect the in-group in various ways. Low evaluations of in-group deviants may signal to both in-group and out-group members that the deviant's behavior does not represent that of a typical group member (Marques, Abrams, Paez & Martinez Taboada, 1998). Harsh punishment of in-group deviants may also stop the spread of deviant behavior to other group members (Ouwerkerk, Kerr, Gallucci & Van Lange, 2005). Other responses to deviance have also been documented – including declassifying the deviant as a group member (Eidelman, Silvia & Biernat, 2006) and increasing levels of communication toward the deviant (Frings et al, in press, Schachter, 1951). Although a variety of responses to in-group deviance have been investigated, there is relatively little research directly examining the role of communication between group members and in-group deviants. The present research does so and tests hypothesis from the

Subjective Group Dynamics (SGD) model (Abrams, et al., 2000; Marques, Abrams & Serodio, 2001).

The Subjective Group Dynamics model (Abrams, et al., 2000) argues that in-group deviants present a threat because they challenge the validity of positive in-group / out-group differentiation. To provide positive social identity, groups must provide a degree of certainty about how the self and others should behave, and that group members agree with these norms. The maintenance of such subjective validity requires that in-group members sustain the subjective reality of the group's norms and standards by adhering to them, or by differentiation between normative and deviant members. Deviants may threaten subjective validity by calling into question in-group norms and also potentially by reducing the overall difference between the in-group and out-group, generating a distinctiveness threat (see Jetten, Spears & Postmes, 2006). Marques et al., (2001) argue that in many cases it is impossible to remove the deviant from the group; thus negative evaluation of the deviant serves to re-enforce group consensus by 'symbolically marginalizing' the deviant. We note that marginalization can take various forms, for example reducing the boundaries of what constitutes acceptable behavior (Eidelman, Silvia & Biernat, 2006). Overall, therefore, highlighting the abnormality of the deviant can strengthen group norms by reinforcing consensus among the majority.

The present article tests a key assumption of the Subjective Group Dynamics model; namely that when deviants are symbolically marginalized,

the perceived validity of positive in-group / out-group differentiation should increase. Additionally, it argues that when group membership is fixed, forms of symbolic marginalization other than extreme negative evaluation are likely to be used. Specifically, this research considers the role of difference oriented communication.

Difference oriented communication as symbolic marginalization

Communications can take various forms. Some can be oriented towards differences between the self and other individuals and groups (such as insults, persuasions or the use of ethnonyms; see Gabriel, 1998; Mullen, Calegero & Leader, 2007). Others can avoid highlighting such differences (by focusing on neutral, common ground and agreed topics, for instance, in the case of the British, a discussion of the weather). Small group research has shown that considerable effort is expended communicating with in-group deviants (Festinger; 1950; 1954; 1957; Schachter, 1951). Recently, Frings, Abrams, Randsely de Moura & Marques, (in press) shows that group members are prepared to attempt to persuade deviance to become normative. When fellow group members agreed to contact the deviant and the issue under consideration was considered important intentions to persuade and actual persuasive communication also increased. However the research did not investigate whether persuasive (or other communications) aim at deviants were related to subjective validity, as would be predicted by SGD.

To address this, the present research investigates ‘*difference oriented communication*’ (DOC) , which we consider a form of symbolic

marginalization. DOC is specifically defined as any communication which signals to the deviant, the self, and / or others that the deviant's behavior or attitude is non-normative. DOC may operate by decreasing the possibility that the group's position is miscast as the same as the deviant's. Potential miscasting has been proposed as an underlying threat posed by in-group deviants (see; Eidelman & Biernat, 2003). Note that to achieve this, the DOC need not change the attitude / behavior of the individual. The act of communicating should itself suffice. Although DOC could be directed either towards in-group deviants or out-group members, it is likely the former will be more prevalent. Group members, particularly those showing in-group bias, typically prefer contact with in-group members (see Binder, et al., 2009). Furthermore, addressing the deviant's continuing norm violation may be perceived as more effective and important than simply limiting negative impact of deviance which has already occurred through communicating with out-group members (e.g. by trying to dismiss or explain away the deviant's behavior).

Engaging in DOC should increase feelings of subjective validity. The selection and evaluation of evidence that deviant opinions / behaviors are non-normative necessitates an assessment of the in-group's position relative to the deviant's. This is likely to involve favorable comparisons between other group members and the deviant and, simultaneously, comparisons that establish the similarity and consensus among the rest of the group. Both comparisons will decrease uncertainty about the validity of the in-group's attitudinal /

behavioral position (Festinger, 1954). Moreover, conditions which induce highly negative evaluations of in-group deviants also invoke high levels of DOC, further suggesting both serve a similar psychological purpose. For instance, in-group members state that they are more willing to attempt to persuade in-group deviants when the status of the in-group is unstable or when the norm violated is perceived to be important (e.g. Marques et al., 2001).

DOC can take a variety of forms. Most directly, group members may seek to *actively persuade* deviants or out-group members. Such communication is reflected by task oriented language which outlines the reason(s) that the persuader's point of view is correct. This can be based on rational arguments (systematic processing) or by activating cognitive shortcuts (heuristic processing see Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989). The latter form of persuasion may include reference to group membership. Less directly, rather than attempting actively to persuade others, group members can *inquire* into why the group member holds an opinion. This more passive form of communication focuses on information gathering rather than attitude change. However it still highlights differences between the normative and deviant positions, and should still act as a form of symbolic marginalization. *Other difference highlighting responses* are also possible. Group members may taunt and insult in-group deviants, or attempt to force them to leave the group as a form of sanction (Gabriel, 1998). These responses contain aggressive, insulting or exclusionary language. They may also involve direct criticism and may hint at potential ostracism, by pointing out the differences between the

deviant and the normative in-group position. Although various types of communication may have differing content, all attempt at some level attempt to question the deviant's opinion and de-legitimize it by highlighting differences between normative and deviant members, hence all are counted as DOC in the present research. In contrast, group members may engage in non-difference oriented communication. For instance, they may simply *accept* the difference in opinion between themselves and the deviant, and neither attempt to persuade or challenge the deviant's position. Such non-DOC responses should be less likely to increase subjective validity.

Desire to engage in DOC is likely to vary according to situational and individual differences. Frings et al (in press) demonstrated that attempts to persuade in-group deviants were more likely when the norm violated was perceived as important. Violation of norms that are perceived to be important may have a greater potential impact on subjective validity and so should also be associated with more DOC which in turn will be associated with increased levels of subjective validity.

To summarize, we contend that DOC is a form of symbolic marginalization. To investigate the effects of DOC on subjective validity, three specific hypotheses are tested. Negative evaluation of in-group deviants should be associated with to higher proportion of DOC relative to non-DOC. In addition, feelings of subjective validity of the in-group norm (relative to the out-group norm) should be greater after DOC, but not after non-DOC. DOC should be more likely when the issue is perceived to be important

In the present study, group members evaluated the in-group and out-group, then evaluated a member of each group before being given an opportunity to send a message to a person who opposed the in-group normative opinion and who was either an out-group member or an in-group (deviant) member. The effect of message type upon changes in relative subjective validity before and after communication were measured.

Method

Participants

Participants were 107 psychology undergraduates from the University of Kent who completed the study in exchange for course credits. The mean age of participants was 20.57 years ($SD = 4.63$). Ninety three were female, 13 were male and 1 did not indicate their gender.

Design

A 2 (Time: 1; Pre-communication, 2; Post-communication) X 2 (Message content: DOC vs. non DOC) design was used. Time was a within participants variable, and DOC condition was based on coding of messages sent between the participant and other group members (see below). An *a priori* assumption was that participants would favor the in-group as a whole over the out-group as a whole. In addition, the dependent variables were evaluation of both the in-group deviant and the out-group member, and the change in subjective validity before and after communication. A manipulation

check was included to ensure that the deviant was perceived to hold a deviant attitudinal position relative to the in-group.

Procedure

Data were collected using an online questionnaire. Participants were initially contacted via an email asking them to participate in a brief psychological survey. When participants logged onto the study they were informed of their rights as participants and gave their informed consent. Participants could only commence the study once they had indicated they had read and understood their rights, were over 18 and provided a valid email address for the purpose of debriefing.

Using an established paradigm (Marques et al. 1998), the first screen ostensibly tested whether participants were either ‘creative’ or ‘methodological’ thinkers by asking them four questions (e.g. ‘Do you make decisions quickly or slowly?’) and asking them twice which of two similar images they preferred from two pairs of pictures. In reality, participants were assigned randomly to a group. Feedback informed them they were either ‘methodological’ or ‘creative thinkers’. Methodological thinkers were then told: “Methodological thinkers are efficient and are more likely to come up with practical solutions in complex situations. Methodological thinkers have an eye for detail. Creative thinkers are good at looking at problems in a new light but they are sometimes impractical”. Creative thinkers were told: “Creative thinkers find novel solutions to problems and they tend to think of

the big picture. In contrast, Methodological thinkers have an eye for detail, but the processes they use to arrive at solutions may lack flair and originality". Subsequent analysis revealed no differences in the responses of participants assigned to either of the two thinking groups and no main effects or interactions with other variables.

Participants were then presented with two arguments in favor of the introduction of smoking restrictions on their university campus and two against. Participants were told they would be placed in small discussion groups of people with the same thinking style, and would be required to come to a group decision as to whether they supported or were against such restrictions. It was stressed in the text that the discussion group's decision would only be recorded if a unanimous decision was reached. A new page then recorded the participant's decision (agree with the ban, disagree or unsure) and the importance the issue had for them. This methodology was adopted to ensure the deviant's behavior had actual ramifications for the discussion group and, in turn, the public image of the thinking group as a whole (see Frings et al., in press).

The next screen established contrasting in-group and out-group norms on the opinion issue and depicted the in-group deviant's position in that intergroup context. Participants were informed that 84.6% of members of previous discussion groups with the in-group's thinking style had expressed the same opinion as the participant. In addition, an initially blank table was displayed that was gradually populated by information about the opinions of

other members of the participant's specific thinking group (creating a discussion group comprised of in-group members). Participants were shown a table displaying the opinions of each of the members (identifiable only by participant number), including the participant¹. Normative in-group members expressed the same attitudinal position as the participant, consistent with the norm held by the in-group as a whole. One in-group member, identified as "participant #130" (the deviant), disagreed with this normative position.

To set the scenario in an intergroup context, participants were simultaneously shown a table showing the opinions of out-group members (those from the thinking group to which the participant did not belong). All out-group members expressed the opposing view to the in-group. This procedure ensured that the evaluation of the deviant was an intragroup judgment taking place in an intergroup context, and also ensured that the discussion groups were perceived to be synonymous with the thinking groups.

Once the participant indicated he or she had read the information the measures of group favorability and the time 1 (pre-communication) measures of subjective validity were presented. Participants were presented with a screen that made them wait for several seconds while two group members were ostensibly selected at random to be evaluated by the participant. The deviant group member and an out-group member were always selected (this was to ensure participants always evaluated both an out-group member and the deviant).

A screen of instructions was then displayed explaining that the participant would be required to send a message to one of these two individuals. Participants were also told that failure to reach a consensus within their in-group would mean that no decision about smoking could be recorded. Participants were then asked to compose a short message either to the deviant or the out-group member (their choice) and submit it for sending. After this was done, the post-communication subjective validity measures were presented, and then the manipulation check of the deviant's attitudinal position was completed. This check was included at the end of the study to ensure the participant did not prematurely discover the hypotheses. Full debriefing followed via email after the study had been completed.

Measures

Importance. Participants were asked "How important to you is the issue of the smoking ban?" (1 = *Very unimportant*, 7 = *Very important*).

Group preference was measured by asking participants how much they agreed with the same two items for both the in-group and out-group; 'I feel favorable towards [in-group / out-group] thinkers as a group' and ' [in-group / out-group] thinkers are good at solving problems' (1 = 'Not at all agree', 7 = 'Very much agree'). The in-group measure was presented first, followed by the out-group measure. In-group favorability had a reasonable internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$), reliability of out-group favorability was acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .64$).

Decision. Participants were asked to indicate their decision on proposals to increase smoking restrictions on their campus. Participants could say they agreed, disagreed or were unsure of their position on the issue. Fifty nine participants were in favor of the restrictions, 40 were against, and 8 were unsure. Data from participants who were unsure were subsequently discarded (during the study these participants were told they would be included as the more popular 'in favor' position, and the rest of the study treated them as such). These data were excluded to ensure that group members included in the study clearly endorsed the in-group normative position, and rejected the out-group position (to the extent to which the issue was viewed as important. Inclusion of these participants in all subsequent analysis did no affect the significance of results, with the exception of one comparison²). Subsequent analysis revealed no effect of held opinion on the responses of participants, and no interactions with other variables. *Favorability* towards the deviant in-group was measured using 4 items asking how favorable friendly, pleasant and intelligent they thought the group member was. All items were 7 point Likert type scale anchored at 1 (*Very unlikable*) and 7 (*Very likable*). A composite mean score was calculated (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$)

Subjective validity. Based on Randsley de Moura (2003) a 4 item scale was used to measure relative subjective group validity. These items asked how fair, valid, reasonable and rational were the attitudes to smoking restrictions held by both the in-group and out-group (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Completely*). Randsley de Moura (2003) found that overall reliability for this scale was high

(Cronbach's α s $>.80$). Based on split half means from previous research the scale was split into two. At time 1 (pre-communication) the 'fair' and 'valid' items were used. Scale reliability was good for the in-group and out-group, (Cronbach's α s = .77 and .83). At time 2 (post-communication) the items used were 'reasonable' and 'rational'. Reliabilities for these scales were good for the in-group and the out-group (Cronbach's α s = .89 and .79) so composite means were calculated. At each time, mean out-group validity was subtracted from mean in-group validity to create a relative subjective validity index. Positive scores on this scale indicate the participant felt their group's attitude was more valid than that of the out-group.

Deviant's attitudinal position. The deviant member's attitude relative to the in-group was measured using the question 'How typical of (in-group) thinkers was participant #130's attitude towards smoking restrictions on campus' (1= 'Not at all typical', 7 = 'Very typical').

Results

Manipulation checks

Group preference. In line with the manipulation, the in-group was preferred ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.05$) to the out-group ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .96$), $t(102) = 4.21$, $p < .001$, confirming that group membership was valued by the participants.

Evaluation. The SGD model holds that people who more strongly differentiate between out-group and in-group norms should also more strongly derogate in-group deviants. This pattern was observed in the present research.

Controlling for evaluations of the in-group, the more negatively the out-group was evaluated the more negatively the in-group deviant was evaluated, $pr = .30, p = .003$.

Deviant's attitudinal position. Four participants did not complete this scale. The similarity between the deviant's attitude and that of the group ($M = 2.81, SD = 1.32$) fell significantly below the mid-point of the scale (4), $t(99) = 9.04, p < .001$. This confirms that the attitude held by the deviant was perceived as being deviant.

Main analysis

Message content. Group members sent messages to their choice between in-group deviant ($n = 75$) or an out-group member ($n = 22$). Content analysis of the messages was undertaken by two coders blind to condition and the hypothesis of the study (Cronbach's $K = .79$). Each message was classed as one of the following: *Non difference oriented* ($n = 25$; classed as explicitly accepting the target's right to hold their opinion or ignoring the difference -for instance by sending a friendly greeting, *persuasion* ($n = 43$; e.g. "you should vote for a ban because smoking is bad for everyone's health"), *inquiry* ($n = 23$; e.g. "what are your reasons for your decision? how did you come to this decision?") or sending a *blank message* ($n = 6$). As the meaning of a 'blank' message is theoretically unclear, possibly signaling either acceptance or ostracization, these participants were excluded from the main analysis. Frequencies of messages according to message target can be seen in Table 1. Chi square analysis revealed non-equal frequencies between in-group and out-

group targets, with more messages being directed at the in-group than the out-group, $\chi^2(1) = 28.52, p < .001$ in addition, persuasion was more frequent than other types of communication, $\chi^2(2) = 8.00, p = .018$. Chi square on the complete design (representing the interaction) revealed no significant effect, $\chi^2(2) = 3.10, p = .21$. Collapsing inquiring and persuasive messages into a single category (DOC) and comparing it to non-DOC, across message target showed that DOC was more frequent than non-DOC, $\chi^2(1) = 18.47, p < .001$. Frequencies for the full 2 X 2 table were also non-equal, $\chi^2(2) = 31.66, p < .001$, suggesting that DOCs targeted at in-group members were most frequent.

Subjective validity. The small number of each type of message sent to out-group members precluded analysis of a fully crossed ANCOVA design (Message target; in-group deviant vs. out-group member X Message type; persuasion, inquiry, non-DOC, blank message) due to small cell sizes³. Hence the following analysis focused only on messages sent to the in-group deviant in order to test the effects of different types of DOCs compared to Non-DOCs; Sixteen participants sent inquiring messages to in-group members, 37 sent persuasive messages and 18 sent non-DOC. Two participants were outliers on the Time 1 subjective validity measures (falling more than 3 standard deviations from the mean) and 1 of these was also an outlier on the Time 2 measure. Following procedures laid out by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) these scores were winnowized to 3 standard deviations from the mean.

ANCOVA was conducted to test the effects of differing types of communication sent to the deviant, with Time 2 subjective validity as the dependent variable, message type (Persuasion, inquiry, non-DOC) as the independent variable and Time 1 subjective validity as a covariate. The effect of the covariate showed that Time 1 and Time 2 validity were significantly related, $F(1, 67) = 28.02, p < .001, \eta^2 = .30$. More importantly, message type had a significant effect on Time 2 subjective validity (once it had been adjusted for Time 1 validity), $F(3, 67) = 3.49, p = .036, \eta^2 = .09$. An *a priori* contrast revealed Time 2 subjective validity was lower when a non-DOC was sent ($M = .11, SD = 1.01$), than when a DOC (a persuasive or inquiry message) was sent ($M = 1.14, SD = 1.30$), $F(1, 67) = 12.81, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$. To explore this effect further, the main effect of message type was unpacked. Time 2 subjective validity was significantly lower when non-DOC ($M = .11, SD = 1.01$) was sent than when the message was inquiring ($M = 1.34, SD = 1.08, p = .013$) or persuasive ($M = .95, SD = 1.53, p = .045$). There was no difference in Time 2 subjective validity following persuasion and inquiry DOCs. ($p = .34$).

To test the effects of DOC controlling for evaluation of the deviant, a multiple regression was undertaken. Time 1 subjective validity was included in the first step of the regression, significantly predicting Time 2 subjective validity, $\beta = .55, t(69) = 5.48, p < .001$. Step 2 of the model included evaluation of the deviant and use of DOC (coded as 1) vs. Non-DOC (coded as 0) as an additional predictor. Evaluation of the deviant did not predict Time

2 validity, $\beta = .037$, $t(67) = .36$, $p = .71$. DOC was significantly related to increased Time 2 validity, $\beta = .25$, $t(67) = 2.46$, $p = .017$. An interaction term for DOC and favorability was calculated and included in the third step of the model, but was non-significant, $\beta = .25$, $t(66) = -7.5$, $p = .18$. Finally, a correlation between evaluations of the in-group deviant and DOC revealed that lower levels of favorability towards the deviant were related to a higher proportion of DOC messages, $r(71) = -.26$, $p = .027$. Evaluation did not directly correlate with Time 1 or 2 validity, $r_s(71) < -.18$, $p_s > .14$.

Meditational analysis.

To test the hypothesis that DOC would be more prevalent when the normative position was perceived as important, meditational analysis of norm importance, use of DOC/ non-Doc and Time 2 validity was undertaken (see Figure 1). All regressions including Time 2 validity included Time 1 validity as a covariate. Norm importance significantly predicted Time 2 validity, $\beta = .22$, $t(88) = 2.42$, $p = .018$. A further regression showed that norm importance also predicted use of DOC, $\beta = .22$, $t(89) = 2.16$, $p = .033$. Use of DOC predicted Time 2 validity, controlling for Time 1 validity and norm importance, $\beta = .19$, $t(87) = 2.1$, $p < .035$. Once use of DOC was included in the model, norm importance still predicted Time 2 validity, $\beta = .18$, $t(87) = .199$, $p = .05$. A Sobel Z test revealed this change to be marginal ($Z = 1.67$, $p = .09$), suggesting partial mediation.

Discussion

Research suggests that in-group deviants threaten the positive social identity of other members of the group (Turner et al., 1987). The SGD model (Marques et al., 2001) predicts that group members who symbolically marginalize deviants should experience an increase in subjective validity. However, while previous research has examined evaluations of deviants, it has not directly considered how other members communicate with deviants, and whether the content of communication (rather than the amount) has implications for subjective validity. The present study provides important new evidence addressing this gap.

As in previous research (e.g. Abrams, Rutland & Cameron, 2003) intergroup differentiation was related to negative evaluation of the in-group deviant, consistent with the idea that participants aim to reject out-group attitudes, not just out-group members.

The present research showed that more negative evaluations of the in-group deviant (a processes hypothesized to be a form of symbolic marginalization; see Marques et al. 2001) are also associated with greater use of DOC. Most importantly, we found that DOC is linked to increased subjective in-group validity. This is an important finding for the SGD model as it supports a key expectation - that communicating in ways that reinforce differences between deviant and other members is linked to feelings of subjective validity. The findings of also increase the scope of SGD. The SGD model developed in part from research into the 'black sheep' effect which

shows that derogation of group members who fail to live up to a normative standard is greater for in-group members than out-group members (e.g. Marques & Yzerbyt, 1988). The present findings suggest that desire to restore and protect its subjective validity applies in situations beyond those involving the black sheep effect – for instance when one group holds a norm in direct opposition with another.

In line with existing literature into in-group deviance, the present research confirms that responses to in-group deviance are likely to be particularly pronounced when the norm violated is perceived as being important; mediational analysis suggested that DOC was more likely to occur under such conditions, and that DOC was associated with increased subjective validity of the in-group norm.

The present study also confirms a number of previous research findings. Previous research has shown that group members are highly motivated to interact with other in-group members (e.g. Binder, et al., 2009) and highly motivated to persuade deviants (Frings et. al, in press). The current research supports these findings – 75% of participants chose to talk to the in-group deviant, and of these, 75% engaged in DOC. This extends previous research suggesting in-group deviants are the likely to be the target of attempts to restore validity, and suggests that DOC is one mechanism via which this can occur.

Several limitations to the present study are acknowledged, and these suggest avenues for further empirical investigation. A key prediction of the

SGD model is that in-group deviance, if left unchecked, should negatively affect subjective validity, and reduce the potential for positive differentiation between the in-group and out-group. The present study does not directly address this issue – rather it tests whether communicatively highlighting in-group deviance is linked to increased levels of subjective validity. Future research should aim to measure levels of subjective validity before deviants are encountered, and then again subsequently before and after symbolic marginalization occurs.

The present study uses a correlational design. Future research could experimentally manipulate whether it was possible to communicate with the deviant or not, or manipulate whether communications were DOC or non-DOC, for instance by instructing participants to communicate about the discussion topic, or a separate, neutral topic. Despite this limitation, the statistical control of initial levels of subjective validity via ANCOVA does suggest that it is DOC, and not simply initial levels of subjective validity, that accounts for variance in post communication validity in the present study.

Although the present research provides evidence that DOC does increase subjective validity, it would be fruitful to investigate possible affective processes underlying the effect. As DOC actively supports a normative position it may trigger feelings of self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is thought to be a form of identity defense, as it transfers blame (see Horowitz, 1981). The expression that one's own (and by extension, the group's) attitude / behavior is morally superior to that of the deviant's (and by

extension any out-groups who share the deviant behavior) should, in parallel with other processes, increase positive relative subjective validity.

Furthermore, DOC may be effective in restoring symbolic validity by establishing attributions that account for why a deviant may hold or espouse an ‘incorrect’ attitude. For example, people could make a dispositional attribution (to personality or lack of understanding) that could explain away the deviant attitude without challenging the group’s validity. This might be particularly likely if the deviant does not change following initial persuasion attempts (see Ostrom, 1990 for a discussion). The present study did not inform group members about the effect their communication had upon the deviant. Future studies could measure the effect of a deviant’s behavioral change (or lack thereof) upon changes in subjective validity, attributions and levels of derogation. It is likely that failure to change would lead to dispositional attributions and increased derogation. If, on the other hand, as the present paper suggests, the purpose of DOC is simply to highlight difference, changes in subjective validity may not alter as a result of changes in the success of the communication.

A further possibility is that the DOC is driven by a sense of cognitive dissonance aroused by feeling towards the deviants versus contrasting feelings towards the deviant in-group (see Festinger, 1957 and Hieder, 1958). A response to reduce this dissonance could be to reinforce the belief that the group maintains the same view as the self. This new belief should lead to an increased sense of subjective validity.

A final possibility, arising from recent research into the interaction between various forms of identity defense, is that DOC is simply one means by which people assert validity of in-group norms or defend identity (see Eidelman & Biernat, 2003; Eidelman, Silvia & Biernat, 2006). This opens the possibility that other types of response could provide the same benefits, or indeed that if subjective validity is already well defended in other ways, there would be no need for DOC. In the present study it is interesting that although evaluation of the deviant appears to motivate DOC, it is DOC itself that predicts subjective validity. In future research it will be useful to see whether evaluation or other responses predict subjective validity when communication is prevented, and whether encouraging DOC can increase subjective validity regardless of other responses to the deviant. When and how various forms of identity defense are activated remains open question, although some research (e.g. Ostrom, 1990) suggests that inclusive strategies may initially be preferred to exclusive ones.

The present study used an online paradigm to investigate the effects of symbolic marginalization. Online communication may be somewhat more distant and task focused than face-to-face interaction, although due to deindividuation some group members may be more expressive online than face-to-face (e.g. Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects; Reicher, Spears and Postmes, 1995; also Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimmons, 2002). However the now pervasive use of social profile websites containing interactions highly similar to those sent in our study, (e.g. MySpace,

Facebook, Instant messenger) blurs the boundaries between online and offline communication, particularly amongst the young population sampled. While the content and effectiveness of online DOC may differ slightly from face-to-face communication, it seems probable that the subsequent effects on subjective validity will remain similar.

In conclusion, the present research supports the idea that communications that highlight differences with in-group deviants can function as a form of symbolic marginalization which increase relative in-group validity. In many contexts deviants cannot be excluded or ignored, and rules of the situation (e.g. committee meetings) may preclude being rude to or about the deviant. In such cases it seems likely that groups reassert the validity of their consensus by highlighting differences with the deviant. Thus, in the face of deviant members, difference oriented communication may be an effective strategy by which groups can both allow differences to exist but also sustain their norms.

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Notes

1. Either 2 or 5 in-group and out-group members were displayed. This manipulation did not have a main effect on, or interactive effects upon, subjective validity when included in a separate ANOVA. Nor did it moderate the effects of type of communication.
2. The difference between inquiring messages and non-DOC fell from $p < .05$ to $p = .09$.
3. Although insufficient numbers of participants sent messages to out-group members to provide detailed analysis comparing differing types of DOC, sufficient were present to compare non-DOC vs. aggregated DOCs (mean aggregate of persuasion & inquiry conditions). ANCOVA on Time 2 subjective validity was conducted with Time 1 subjective validity as a covariate, message type (DOC vs. Non-DOC) and message target (in-group deviant vs. out-group member). The covariate was significant, $F(1, 86) = 28.83, p < .001, \eta^2 = .25$. There was a main effect of message type $F(1,86) = 6.48, p = .013, \eta^2 = .07$, reflecting higher levels of Time 2 subjective validity amongst group members who sent DOCs ($M = 1.11, SD = 1.43$) than amongst those that sent non-DOCs ($M = .08, SD = 1.13$). The main effect of message target and the interaction term were both non-significant, $F_s < .13, p_s > .72, \eta^2_s < .001$.

Table 1: Frequency of different message types according to message target.

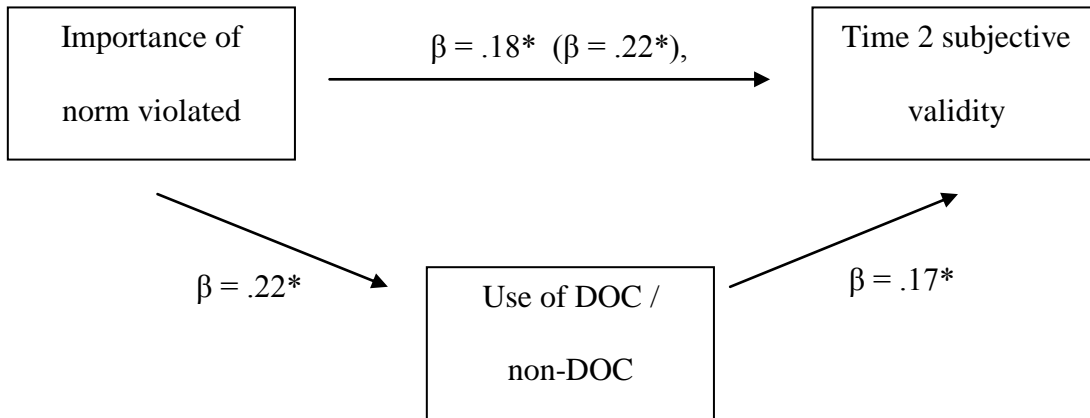
	Message Type				Total
	Persuasion	Inquiry	Non-DOC	Did not send	
Message					
Recipient					
In-group	37 (52%)	16 (23%)	18 (25%)	4	75
Deviant					
Out-group	6 (30%)	7 (35%)	7 (35%)	2	22
Normative					
Total	43 (47%)	23 (25%)	25 (27%)	6	97

Note: Percentages are with rows, excluding group members who nominated a recipient but did not send a message.

Figure Caption

Figure 1: The meditational effect of difference orientation use on the effect of issue importance on Time 2 Subjective validity. Non mediated β included in parenthesis.

Figure 1



Note: All regressions including Time 2 validity included Time 1 validity as a co-variate. β in parenthesis indicates the non-mediated relationship between importance and subjective validity. Asterisk indicate $p < .05$.