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The infamous among us: Enhanced reputational memory for uncooperative ingroup members

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ABSTRACT

People remember uncooperative individuals better than cooperative ones. We hypothesize that this is particularly true when uncooperative individuals belong to one's ingroup, as their behavior violates positive expectations. Two studies examined the effect of minimal group categorization on reputational memory of the social behavior of particular ingroup and outgroup members. We manipulated uncooperative behavior as the unfair sharing of resources with ingroup members (Study 1), or as descriptions of cheating (Study 2). Participants evaluated several uncooperative and cooperative (and neutral) ingroup and outgroup members. In a surprise memory test, they had to recognize target faces and recall their behavior. We disentangled face recognition, reputational memory, and guessing biases with multinomial models of source monitoring. The results show enhanced reputational memory for uncooperative ingroup members, but not uncooperative outgroup members. In contrast, guessing behavior indicated that participants assumed more ingroup cooperation than outgroup cooperation. Our findings integrate prior research on memory for uncooperative person behavior and person memory in group contexts. We suggest that the ability to remember the uncooperative amidst the supposedly cooperative ingroup could stabilize intragroup cooperation.

1. Introduction

A common group membership elicits mutual trust between interaction partners and facilitates cooperation (e.g., Balliet, Wu, & De Dreu, 2014; Brewer & Caporael, 2006; Turner, 1982). Uncooperative group members exploit cooperative tendencies within groups. However, ingroup cooperation may be maintained, as long as uncooperative individuals have an infamous reputation in their group, and fellow group member restrict the cooperativeness accordingly. In the present studies, we examine whether group membership (i.e., ingroup, outgroup) modulates memory for targets that behave uncooperatively. We expect that uncooperative ingroup members will be better remembered than uncooperative outgroup members.

Our research combines two perspectives on person memory. First, research has shown that uncooperative individuals are better remembered than neutral or cooperative individuals because their behavior violates expectations (e.g., Bell & Buchner, 2012; Bell, Mieth, & Buchner, 2015). Second, it has been found that ingroup contexts generally enhance memory for person information (e.g., Brewer, Weber, & Carini, 1995; Howard & Rothbart, 1980; Schaller & Maass, 1989). In two studies, we manipulated group membership with experimentally created groups (i.e., the minimal group paradigm, Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). In particular, we examined *reputational memory* (i.e., memory for uncooperative, cooperative, or neutral behavior of a person) independently of other processes involved in the memory task (i.e., old-new discrimination of faces; guessing) by applying multinomial models of source monitoring (Bayen, Murnane, & Erdfelder, 1996). Reputational memory has also been referred to as source memory in previous studies (e.g., see Buchner, Bell, Mehl, & Musch, 2009). At first glance, memorizing more uncooperative ingroup members than cooperative ones may seem inconsistent with the frequently observed phenomenon of positive ingroup bias (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Positive ingroup assumptions may appear as *guessing bias* (e.g., in contrast to "them", "we" are likely to be cooperative). Ingroup members may guess that unknown group members are rather cooperative, even though individual uncooperative group members become infamous.

1.1. Uncooperative behavior in group contexts

Social interactions that produce balanced outcomes are usually considered fair and cooperative, while unbalanced outcomes

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(i.e., those involving gain at the expense of others) are considered unfair and uncooperative. The selection of cooperative interaction partners is important (Baumard, André, & Sperber, 2013; Noë & Hammerstein, 1994; Trivers, 1971). The simplest way is to select members of one's own group, because shared group membership is deemed to be a reliable and efficient heuristic for successful cooperation (e.g., Brewer, 2007; Turner, 1982). Furthermore, shared group membership is associated with successful coordination, mutual trust and support from others (Mehta, Starmer, & Sugden, 1994; Platow, Foddy, Yamagishi, Lim, & Chow, 2012; Yamagishi, Jin, & Kiyonari, 1999). People are also more willing to cooperate with ingroup members than outgroup members (for a review, see Balliet et al., 2014; Brewer & Kramer, 1986; Kramer & Brewer, 1984).

Uncooperative ingroup members exploit fellow group members, because they signal cooperation, yet behave uncooperatively. The reliable detection (Cosmides, 1989) and reputational memory (e.g., Buchner et al., 2009) of uncooperative ingroup members is thus crucial for maintaining cooperative tendencies towards ingroup members. Accurate individual reputations solve this problem, as they build on past behavior and help to prevent uncooperative behavior in the future.

1.2. Memory for uncooperative targets

Indeed, people remember uncooperative targets better than cooperative or neutral ones (e.g., Bell, Buchner, Erdfelder, et al., 2012; Buchner et al., 2009), and distrust them in future interactions (Oda & Nakajima, 2010; Wilkowski & Chai, 2012). Bell, Buchner, and colleagues uncovered general memory processes that account for this effect (e.g., Bell & Buchner, 2012): first, people remember socially relevant information about a person better than socially irrelevant information (Bell, Giang, & Buchner, 2012). Moreover, there is a memory advantage for positive and negative person information compared to neutral information (Bell & Buchner, 2010, 2011; Bell, Buchner, Erdfelder, et al., 2012). These effects can be attributed to general effects of (self-) relevance and emotional information on memory, especially if the information is threatening (e.g., Kensinger, 2007; Kensinger & Corkin, 2003; Li, Li, & Guo, 2009).

Second, behavior that violates expectations enhances reputational memory. Uncooperative behavior is remembered better than cooperative behavior if it occurs infrequently (Barclay, 2008; Bell, Buchner, & Musch, 2010; Volstorf, Rieskamp, & Stevens, 2011). Similarly, people remember the uncooperative behavior of trustworthy-looking targets better than the uncooperative behavior of untrustworthy-looking targets (Bell, Buchner, Kroneisen, & Giang, 2012; Suzuki & Suga, 2010), because reputational memory is generally enhanced for schema-incongruent information. A schema is knowledge about a target that leads to expectations regarding the target's attributes, such as its behavior. Schematic knowledge influences reputational memory (knowing the target's attributes) and guessing (assuming the target's attributes) differently. People more accurately remember target attributes that violate the target's schema (e.g., Bell et al., 2015; Hastie & Kumar, 1979; Hicks & Cockman, 2003; Küppers & Bayen, 2014). Guessing represents either schema-driven biases (i.e., guessing biases; Bayen, Nakamura, Dupuis, & Yang, 2000; Küppers & Bayen, 2014) or, if available, the perceived contingency between targets and attributes (Bayen & Kuhlmann, 2011; Klauer & Meiser, 2000).

In group contexts, people recognize and recall stereotype-inconsistent information more accurately than stereotype-consistent or irrelevant information, after taking guessing into account (Stangor & McMillan, 1992). Recent research on memory in group contexts has taken a closer look at individuals' behaviors whilst controlling for item recognition and guessing biases. For example, it has been observed that strong stereotypes of a target elicit enhanced memory for any exhibited traits that are stereotype-inconsistent (Gawronski, Ehrenberg, Banse, Zukova, & Klauer, 2003). Stereotypical portrait pictures (e.g., of skinheads) improve memory for unexpected target behavior (Ehrenberg & Klauer, 2005). Similar results have been found in the context of gender categorization: participants remember women's behavior better when they violate stereotypes of female cooperativeness or neatness (Kroneisen & Bell, 2013). In sum, people remember schema-incongruent person behavior better than schema-congruent person behavior.

1.3. Memory for ingroup and outgroup information

Intergroup contexts (i.e., ingroup, outgroup) also modulate person memory. Shared categories provide the basis for differentiating between ingroup and outgroup members. Self-categorization indicates that the self belongs to one category, but not to the other (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This enhances the relevance of fellow group members and elicits group-based expectations (Foddy, Platow, & Yamagishi, 2009; Gordijn, Wigboldus, & Yzerbyt, 2001; Terry & Hogg, 1996).

First, the greater relevance of the ingroup versus the outgroup is reflected in differential group perception and memory. The ingroup is perceived as heterogeneous, whereas outgroups are perceived as homogeneous (e.g., Boldry, Gaertner, & Quinn, 2007; Haslam, Oakes, Turner, & McGarty, 1995). Accordingly, ingroup faces are recognized better than outgroup faces (Bernstein, Young, & Hugenberg, 2007; Hugenberg, Young, Bernstein, & Sacco, 2010). In recall tasks (e.g., the "who-said-what"-paradigm), people make fewer within-group errors (assigning behavior to the wrong member within one group) than between-group errors (assigning behavior to a person of the wrong group) when group categorization is salient. In other words, people demonstrate an individualized person memory for ingroup members, while demonstrating a stronger category-based memory for outgroup members (Brewer et al., 1995; Ostrom, Carpenter, Sedikides, & Li, 1993; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992).

Second, ingroup indicators (e.g., "we" or "us") have a positive valence (Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, & Tyler, 1990). Positive perceptions of the ingroup bolster the positive self-images of group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Memory biases foster this ingroup favoritism in impression formation. For example, group members use abstract knowledge to make positive ingroup judgments, whereas negative group judgments are based on the retrieval of specific (negative) ingroup behaviors (Sherman, Klein, Laskey, & Wyer, 1998). In their classic studies, Howard and Rothbart (1980) showed that the members of minimal groups tend to assign correct negative information to the outgroup more frequently than to the ingroup. This is in line with ingroup favoritism. However, the authors did not differentiate between guessing and actual memory, and their findings could be attributed to guessing biases in favor of the ingroup.

Other studies have shown enhanced memory performance for violations of ingroup positivity. For example, Schaller and Maass (1989) and Gramzow, Gaertner, and Sedikides (2001) found that recall and group assignment of negative and self-discrepant information was more accurate for novel ingroups than novel outgroups. In sum, an ingroup context enhances person memory, because it increases a person's relevance and creates expectations of them. In contrast to prior studies, we draw on the idea that reputational memory is not simply related to recognizing a behavioral description and assigning it to the correct group. Instead, reputational memory implies that people recognize an ingroup (or outgroup) member and remember how that particular person behaved in the past. An enhanced reputational memory for