

The importance of social structure and social interaction in stereotype consensus and content: Is the whole greater than the sum of its parts?

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Abstract

This paper addresses the hypothesis derived from self-categorization theory (SCT) that the relationship between groups and stereotyping will be affected by the social structural conditions within which group interaction occurs. A mixed design experiment (n = 56) measured low-status groups' stereotypes and preferences for conflict with a high-status outgroup prior to and after within-group discussion across varying social structural conditions. Over time, participants in 'open' conditions consensualized around positive conceptions of the outgroup and endorsed acceptance of their own 'low status' position. However, in 'closed' conditions participants consensualized around positive conceptions of the ingroup, negative conceptions of the outgroup, and tended towards preferences for collective protest. It is argued that the data support S-CT's contention that stereotyping and group processes are fundamentally interlinked and that neither can be properly understood in isolation from the dynamics of the surrounding intergroup context. Copyright © 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

Social cognition research has recently begun to acknowledge the importance of stereotyping in maintaining asymmetries of power within intergroup relations (Fiske & Depret, 1996). Here stereotyping is explicitly recognized as playing some role in the dynamics of social structural relations. For example, Glick and Fiske (2001) argue that high status groups in cooperative relations with low status groups will hold paternalistic stereotypes of the low status group whereas low status groups in competitive relationships with high status groups may endorse envious stereotypes of those high status groups.

As such, the social cognition account converges with a body of research based upon self-categorization theory (SCT) which proposes an inter-relationship between stereotyping and the dynamics of group-level relations (Oakes, Reynolds, Haslam, & Turner, 1999). SCT proposes that

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stereotyping is a dynamic process through which social groups make sense of and pursue their identity-related goals within intergroup contexts (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, Reynolds, & Doosje, 2002; Oakes et al., 1999; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). In this sense stereotypes are understood to be both (a) a representation (or construction) of the ingroup and its surrounding social relations and (b) an aspect of the social psychology that actually produces those very same social relationships. Therefore stereotyping is one aspect of a dynamic inter-related process involving subjectivity, group processes and intergroup relations (Haslam et al., 2002; Turner & Oakes, 1986).

A wealth of evidence supports this SCT account of the inter-relationship between stereotyping and the nature of the surrounding intergroup context (Bar-Tal & Labin, 2001; Haslam & Turner, 1992; Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Hayes, 1992; see Oakes et al., 1994 for an overview). Haslam et al. (1998) have also emphasized the role that intragroup interaction plays in developing stereotype consensus by demonstrating how consensus increases when participants are allowed to engage in group discussion (see also Klein, Jacobs, Gemoets, Licata, & Lambert, in press). Emphasizing the intimate relationships between social structure and group process, Haslam et al. (1998) found that stereotypes were more consensual (and were consensualized) in intergroup as opposed to intragroup contexts. Taken together, this existing body of research suggests that social stereotypes emerge from interaction within social groups and that group processes are in their turn affected by the surrounding intergroup context (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Reynolds, 1998).

Previous research has begun to demonstrate the importance of stereotyping in mediating collective action in the context of particular social structural relations. Adapting a paradigm developed by Wright, Taylor, and Moghaddam (1990), Reynolds, Oakes, Haslam, Nolan, and Dolnik (2000) created an artificial intergroup context which manipulated perceived mobility from a low- to a high-status group. In conditions where there was perceived mobility, low status participants created relatively consensual positive stereotypes of the high status group and tended to accept their own low status position. However, those in conditions of perceived impermeability demonstrated a preference for collective protest and developed a relatively negative outgroup stereotype.

Thus, in line with a body of existing research and theory, Reynolds et al. (2000) were able to demonstrate that social structure has a direct impact upon levels of collective conflict (Boen & Vanbeselaere, 1998; Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers, van Kippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Kelly, 1993; Tajfel, 1981; Wright, 1997; Wright & Taylor, 1998; Wright et al., 1990). Going beyond this existing research, they also showed that the emergence of collective protest was mediated by the favourability of the outgroup stereotypes. In other words, they demonstrated that stereotypes operated as psychological *tools* through which low status groups mobilized themselves for collective action (Haslam et al., 2002). The intergroup context also impacted upon stereotype consensus. Those in conditions of potential mobility developed more consensual ingroup and outgroup stereotypes than those in conditions of immobility. Reynolds et al. (2000) suggest that these differences were due to the fact that participants in mobility conditions adopted a relatively positive status-relevant outgroup stereotype that had been made available to them in the experimental context. Those seeking to challenge the status hierarchy rejected the available stereotype and therefore needed to craft a new one. They argued, however, that there had been no opportunity for the group process through which new stereotypes are developed to occur and that, as a result, there had been no stereotype consensualization.

Existing identity-based research therefore goes some way towards supporting the contention that stereotypes, groups and intergroup relationships work together to allow groups to (re)engage with the surrounding social context. However, the empirical data relating to this relationship suffer from important limitations. First, in consensualization research, intergroup relationships have only been operationalized by simply 'adding in' other groups to a perceiver's comparative context (e.g. Haslam et al., 1998b; Klein et al., in press). Therefore a systematic analysis of the impact of different forms of

social structure upon the relationship between the group and stereotype consensualization has yet to take place. This neglect becomes more acute when one considers that other identity-based research has shown that different intergroup contexts can have very different impacts on the direction of norm development (e.g. Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990; Stott & Drury, 2000; Stott, Hutchison, & Drury, 2001). Second, Reynolds et al. (2000) have demonstrated that stereotype construction and consensualization can be affected by different intergroup contexts and that the resulting stereotypes are linked to social action. But it remains to be shown what effects different intergroup contexts have upon stereotyping and collective action when intragroup interaction has actually taken place.

To address these limitations, the current study explores the ways in which social structure impacts upon stereotyping and collective action when participants have engaged in group interaction. More specifically, it tests SCT's prediction that different forms of social structure will lead groups to develop different levels of stereotype consensus and that those stereotypes will have different content. In so doing, the study aims to explore the validity of SCT based arguments that stereotyping and group processes are fundamentally interlinked and that neither can be adequately understood in isolation from the dynamics of the surrounding intergroup context (Haslam et al., 2002; Oakes et al., 1999; p. 126; Turner & Oakes, 1986).

METHOD

Design

The study used a mixed design, with social structure as a between-subjects factor (three levels: open, quota and closed) and time (before and after intragroup discussion) as a within-subjects factor. Measures were taken of ingroup and outgroup stereotype content and preference for particular behavioural strategies (acceptance, individual retest and collective protest).

Participants

Participants were 56 first year psychology undergraduates recruited from a subject pool who took part in the experiment for course credits. The distribution of age and gender was broadly representative of that of the first year cohort of the Psychology Department as a whole, with females outnumbering males in a three-to-one ratio and with a modal age of 19.

Materials and Procedure

The questionnaires used in this study were based on those used by Reynolds et al. (2000). They asked participants to rate their preferences for three behavioural options: acceptance of the outgroup decision; request for an individual retest; and rejection of the legitimacy of the status hierarchy and adoption of collective protest. These options were rated on 9-point Likert scales. Participants were then instructed to select one of these three options as their preferred strategy. After this, they were required to select three adjectives from a list of 20 to describe (i) their own group and (ii) an outgroup. Two individual and one group questionnaire(s) were developed. The individual questionnaires supplemented the above measures with items measuring perceived fairness, outcome concern,

outcome dependency, desire to join the outgroup and identification. In addition to these items the second individual questionnaire included measures of perceived similarity, agreement and levels of empowerment. Group discussion was also recorded.

Participants arrived at the laboratory in groups of six to eight and were met by second-year psychology undergraduates posing as members of a high-status group. They were told that the study concerned group decision-making in an organizational context, and that they would be required to complete two tasks to identify their level of skill in relation to traits associated with effective decision-making. Their performance on the first of these tasks would determine whether they completed the rest of the experiment (and future experiments in the series) as members of a high- (sophisticated) or low- (unsophisticated) status group. Participants were then told that they had 10 min to read through the first decision-making problem and answer by making a short essay-style response that would serve as the basis from which members of the sophisticated group would assess their decision-making skills.

Participants were then presented with the first scenario. On completion of this task the essays were collected and taken to another room for 'assessment'. While this assessment was supposedly taking place, and to enhance its plausibility, the experimenter gave a short presentation to the participants. The presentation informed participants about the nature of the remaining experiment and the consequences of their performance in the decision-making task.

First, they were told that their performance would be assessed on the basis of evidence for five traits associated with high levels of achievement in commerce and industry: creativity, rigorousness, complexity, analytical ability and conscientiousness. To reinforce the salience of these traits, an overhead projector was used to display them during the presentation. This presentation of traits was intended to provide participants with the five characteristics that would act as a status-defining stereotype of the high status group. The participants were informed that the extent to which they were judged to have demonstrated these characteristics in the decision-making task would be expressed as a grade.

Second, participants were told that they were all currently members of a low-status group, but that any participant achieving a grade of A-minus or above would be reallocated to the high-status group. To reinforce this manipulation, participants were informed that there would be further experiments in this series and that their future participation as high- or low- status group members would be determined as an outcome of their performance on the decision-making task. Desirability of high-status group membership was operationalized by informing participants that this group: (a) possessed traits associated with high achievement and that therefore membership would be an acknowledgement of their ability; (b) would take part in more interesting assignments during the course of this and future experiments; (c) would grade future tasks performed by low-status group members and ultimately determine who would and would not be allowed into the high-status group; and (d) would be able to take part in a lottery at the end of the study for a £50 prize, whereas those in the low status group would be in a lottery with only a £10 prize.

On completion of the presentation, a second decision-making scenario was distributed and a short time later a member of the high-status group returned with the graded assessments. The second scenario was used to lend plausibility to claims that there were further tasks to be completed during the experiment but it was never actually completed. Feedback was provided individually, in written form, so that participants were unaware of each other's results. Assessments were graded on a standardized form that rated each of the five stereotypical traits associated with high status group membership on 10-point scales. The scales were then totalled to give an overall grade, and comments were provided depending on condition.

The feedback was bogus and was used to vary the level of perceived mobility from the low-status into the high-status group. For the *open* condition, participants were informed that they had achieved a

grade of between B-minus and B-plus, and therefore that the conditions for entry to the high-status group had not been met; thus boundaries were presented as permeable and as if there was genuine opportunity for mobility. No additional comments were provided. For the *quota* condition, participants were informed that they had met the required grade; however in the comments section, they were also told that high-status group members had now decided to promote only a token percentage of participants (10%) and that on this occasion these particular participants had been unsuccessful. Finally, in the *closed* condition, the same feedback was provided as for the quota condition, except that in the comments section participants were informed that no one from the low-status group was to be promoted, since high-status group members did not want to be 'swamped'.

Following their confirmation as members of the low-status group, each set of six to eight participants were divided into two groups with one of the groups being taken to a second room. Thus none of the participants were informed about any other group's subsequent status. In the closed condition, participants were given the impression that everyone remained low-status; but participants in the open and quota conditions were given the impression that some others were actually being promoted to the high-status group.

Participants were then required to fill out the first individual questionnaire. Following this, they were instructed to complete the group questionnaire and to reach consensus on group impressions and behavioural strategies. The experimenter left the room and group discussion was recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Following the group decision, participants completed the second individual questionnaire before being debriefed. After the study all participants were entered in the lottery draw and a prize of £50 was awarded to one person.

RESULTS

Levels of Collective Conflict

Behavioural Preferences and Strategy

A 3 (condition) \times 3 (behavioural preferences) \times 2 (phase) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on preference scores which revealed a main effect for condition ($F(2, 51) = 4.03$; $p < 0.05$). There were also two two-way interactions between phase and condition ($F(2, 53) = 7.76$; $p < 0.001$) and between phase and preference scores ($F(2, 53) = 8.17$, $p < 0.01$). Mean preference values are displayed in Table 1.

In line with expectations, tests for simple effects revealed that prior to group discussion preferences for collective protest were significantly higher in closed than in open ($t(34) = -3.98$, $p < 0.001$) or

Table 1. Mean levels of preference and behavioural strategy across phase and condition

	Acceptance	Individual retest	Collective protest	Strategy
Open				
Phase 1	4.59	3.41	2.82	2.50
Phase 2	3.89	4.61	4.44	2.75
Quota				
Phase 1	4.47	3.24	3.18	1.59
Phase 2	4.00	3.35	3.65	2.00
Closed				
Phase 1	3.42	4.80	5.16	1.39
Phase 2	2.35	4.30	6.05	1.78

token conditions ($t(34) = 3.12$; $p < 0.01$). Preferences for individual retest were also significantly higher in closed in contrast to open ($t(35) = -2.22$, $p < 0.05$) and token conditions ($t(35) = -2.75$, $p < 0.01$). Following group discussion, those in closed conditions continued to express higher preferences for collective protest in contrast to open ($t(36) = -3.46$, $p < 0.01$) and token conditions ($t(35) = -4.47$, $p < 0.001$) but also displayed significantly lower preferences for acceptance than those in open ($t(36) = 3.17$; $p < 0.01$) and token conditions ($t(35) = 3.26$, $p < 0.01$).

Group discussion led to a general decrease in preferences for acceptance ($t(52) = 3.23$, $p < 0.01$) and a general increase in preference for collective protest ($t(52) = -3.62$, $p < 0.001$). In line with expectations, preferences for acceptance showed a significant decrease under closed conditions ($t(18) = 2.63$, $p < 0.05$) whilst preferences for collective protest showed a significant increase ($t(18) = -2.32$, $p < 0.05$). Rather unexpectedly, under open conditions preferences for collective protest also increased significantly across phase ($t(17) = -2.52$, $p < 0.05$).

Significant differences were identified in the behavioural strategy adopted across conditions at phase 1 ($\chi^2 = 20.81$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$) and phase 2 ($\chi^2 = 16.23$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$). Tests of simple effects indicated that collective protest was more likely under closed conditions during both phase 1 (open ($U = 45.5$, $p < 0.001$); token ($U = 63.5$, $p < 0.001$)) and phase 2 (open ($U = 57.5$, $p < 0.001$); token ($U = 80.0$, $p < 0.01$)). There was also a significant increase in the mean value of strategy across phase ($Z = -2.74$, $p < 0.01$) indicating that after discussion groups moved away from acceptance. However, none of the contrasts within conditions were significant.

Stereotyping

In this section we examine the pattern of stereotype evaluations and levels of consensus observed in both ingroup and outgroup stereotypes across phase. The consensus coefficient was computed by counting the number of times each trait that a participant selected was also selected by other participants in the same condition and dividing this number by the maximum number of times which those traits could have been selected by those other participants (i.e. $3(n - 1)$) (Haslam et al., 1998b). To calculate evaluation scores, a post-test questionnaire was developed using 9-point scales rating the positive and negative valance of each of the 20 adjectives used in the main study. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 participants among the population from which the present study drew its sample. The mean score for each adjective was calculated with high scores indicating a positive and low scores a negative valance. This mean score was then applied to each of the three adjectives selected by each participant and subsequently an individual mean evaluation score was computed.

Stereotype Valance

A 2 (target—ingroup versus outgroup) \times 2 (phase) \times 3 (condition) mixed ANOVA was conducted on evaluation scores. The analysis revealed a main effect for target ($F(1, 53) = 82.69$; $p < 0.001$), two two-way interactions between target and condition ($F(2, 53) = 4.46$; $p < 0.05$) and between target and phase ($F(1, 53) = 6.57$; $p < 0.05$). Mean evaluation scores are shown in Table 2.

One-way ANOVAs revealed that there were significant differences between conditions only in respect to the outgroup stereotypes both at phase 1 ($F(2, 52) = 3.27$; $p < 0.05$) and phase 2 ($F(2, 52) = 4.66$; $p < 0.01$). Outgroup evaluations in the open condition were significantly more positive than in token ($t(33) = 2.25$, $p < 0.05$) and closed ($t(36) = 2.21$; $p < 0.05$) conditions at phase 1 and token ($t(33) = 2.9$; $p < 0.01$) and closed ($t(36) = 2.79$; $p < 0.01$) conditions at phase 2. Over time there

Table 2. Mean stereotype evaluation and consensus scores across phase and condition

	Ingroup		Outgroup	
	Evaluation	Consensus	Evaluation	Consensus
Open				
Phase 1	7.34	0.25	6.47	0.36
Phase 2	7.29	0.25	6.09	0.25
Quota				
Phase 1	7.45	0.21	5.12	0.22
Phase 2	7.50	0.25	4.95	0.25
Closed				
Phase 1	7.19	0.19	5.42	0.23
Phase 2	7.52	0.34	4.55	0.34

were significant shifts in stereotype evaluation *only* under closed conditions where evaluations of the ingroup became significantly more positive ($t(19) = -2.34$; $p < 0.05$) and evaluations of the outgroup became significantly more negative ($t(19) = 2.31$; $p < 0.05$).

Stereotype Consensus

A 2 (target) \times 2 (phase) \times 3 (condition) mixed ANOVA was conducted on consensus coefficient scores. The analysis revealed main effects for phase ($F(1, 52) = 19.36$; $p < 0.001$) and target ($F(1, 52) = 40.91$; $p < 0.001$), a significant two-way interaction between phase and condition ($F(2, 52) = 24.75$; $p < 0.001$) and a significant three-way interaction between target, phase and condition ($F(2, 52) = 14.09$; $p < 0.001$). Tests of simple effects revealed that prior to group discussion ingroup stereotypes were significantly more consensual under open than under closed conditions ($t(36) = 2.78$; $p < 0.01$). At this point those in the open condition were also significantly more consensual in their outgroup stereotype in comparison to both token ($t(33) = 4.37$; $p < 0.001$) and closed conditions ($t(36) = 4.44$; $p < 0.001$). However, subsequent to group discussion those ingroup stereotypes that had emerged under closed conditions were significantly more consensual than in both open ($t(36) = -3.65$; $p < 0.01$) and token conditions ($t(35) = -3.71$; $p < 0.01$). Nonetheless, those in the open condition remained significantly more consensual in their outgroup stereotype than those in both the token ($t(33) = 6.12$; $p < 0.001$) and closed conditions ($t(36) = 10.01$; $p < 0.001$). The observed increase in levels of ingroup stereotype consensus across phase in the closed condition was significant ($t(19) = -6.68$; $p < 0.001$). Likewise, there was a significant increase in outgroup stereotype consensus in the open condition across phase ($t(18) = 3.82$; $p < 0.01$).

The Relationship Between Stereotypes and Collective Conflict

A series of regression analyses were conducted on the data to assess the extent to which participants' stereotypes mediated the levels of observed collective conflict. A mediating variable should (a) have a significant relationship with the dependent variable and (b) reduce the relationship between the independent and dependent variables when the mediating variable is entered into a regression equation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Stereotype consensus and evaluation scores for both ingroup and outgroup

Table 3. Correlation coefficients for stereotype evaluation and consensus at phase 1

Stereotype	Preferences			
	Accept	Retest	Protest	Strategy
Open				
Ingroup				
Evaluation	0.11	-0.31	-0.47*	-0.34
Consensus	0.33	-0.55*	-0.57*	-0.68**
Outgroup				
Evaluation	0.24	0.00	-0.11	-0.11
Consensus	0.27	-0.13	-0.05	0.11
Token				
Ingroup				
Evaluation	-0.53*	-0.15	-0.43	-0.61**
Consensus	-0.47	0.16	-0.2	-0.52*
Outgroup				
Evaluation	0.49*	-0.17	0.21	-0.29
Consensus	0.08	0.00	-0.2	-0.48*
Closed				
Ingroup				
Evaluation	-0.11	0.05	0.06	0.04
Consensus	-0.70***	-0.09	0.60**	0.51*
Outgroup				
Evaluation	0.17	-0.16	-0.16	-0.16
Consensus	0.1	0.06	0.04	-0.2

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

stereotypes were each added independently into separate regression equations with each preference score as a dependent variable. In neither case was mediation detected.

Correlation techniques were then used to examine the relationships between stereotypes, preferences and strategies within each condition across phase. Correlations for phase 1 are displayed in Table 3 and for phase 2 in Table 4.

The pattern of correlations prior to group discussion indicate that participants in the open condition who developed consensually positive ingroup stereotypes were less likely to express a preference for individual retest and collective protest and tended toward acceptance as a behavioural strategy. In token conditions those who were consensually positive in their ingroup stereotype showed lower preferences for acceptance but were actually more likely to adopt acceptance as a behavioural strategy. However, those who developed consensually positive outgroup stereotypes were more likely to show a preference for, and to accept, the outgroup decision. Significantly too, those under closed conditions who developed consensual ingroup stereotypes were less likely to express preference for acceptance and more likely to express preference for and to engage in collective action.

After group discussion, those in the open condition who developed a positive outgroup stereotype tended to express lower preferences for individual retesting. Under token conditions those who developed consensual ingroup stereotypes were less likely to express a preference for individual retest. Moreover, those who developed a negative outgroup stereotype tended not to adopt acceptance as a strategy of action. Again, under closed conditions those who developed positive outgroup stereotypes tended to show a preference for and to adopt a strategy of individual retest, whilst those who developed a negative outgroup stereotype tended to opt for collective protest.¹

¹No participants in the closed condition opted for 'accept' as a behavioural strategy.

Table 4. Correlation coefficients for stereotype evaluation and consensus at phase 2

Stereotype	Preferences			
	Accept	Retest	Protest	Strategy
Open				
Ingroup				
Evaluation	0.17	0.03	-0.19	-0.09
Consensus	0.03	0.1	-0.14	-0.09
Outgroup				
Evaluation	0.04	-0.57*	0.1	-0.09
Consensus	-0.18	0.4	0.19	0.26
Token				
Ingroup				
Evaluation	-0.11	0.24	0.06	-0.23
Consensus	0.11	-0.65**	0.39	-0.13
Outgroup				
Evaluation	-0.26	0.33	0.27	-0.52*
Consensus	-0.16	0.44	0.23	0.38
Closed				
Ingroup				
Evaluation	0.23	0.23	-0.06	-0.26
Consensus	0.1	0.06	0.04	-0.2
Outgroup				
Evaluation	0.34	0.49*	-0.36	-0.48*
Consensus	-0.33	0.17	-0.01	0.04

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

DISCUSSION

The novelty of the present study lies in its examination of the impact of intragroup interaction on stereotyping and social action in response to different forms of social structure. In line with previous research, the study provides evidence for the relationship between the nature of intergroup relationships and the emergence of collective conflict (Boen & Vanbeselaere, 1998; Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers et al., 1990; Kelly, 1993; Wright, 1997; Wright et al., 1990; Wright & Taylor, 1998). However, going beyond this work, the present study suggests that group interaction can turn people away from acceptance and increase preferences for collective conflict even under situations of social mobility (cf. Wright & Taylor, 1998). The current study also provides further evidence that social structural variations lead to the development of markedly different levels of stereotype favourability and consensus (Reynolds et al., 2000).

This study extends prior research by demonstrating that the effects of intragroup interaction on stereotyping content and consensus are not straightforward but are affected by the social structural conditions in which interaction occurs (cf. Klein et al., in press). Where mobility between high and low status groups was not possible, group interaction enhanced ingroup favourability and outgroup evaluations became increasingly negative. However, when there was mobility group interaction did *not* affect the favourability of either ingroup or outgroup stereotypes. Moreover, under closed conditions there was a dramatic increase in ingroup stereotype consensus following group discussion but there was no corresponding increase in outgroup stereotype consensus. In contrast, under open conditions outgroup stereotype consensus increased while levels of ingroup stereotype consensus remained the same. In other words groups in closed conditions oriented toward a positive view of

themselves and a negative view of the outgroup but under open conditions groups reinforced a positive stereotype of both themselves and the outgroup.

These results are consistent with other social-identity based analyses of stereotyping (e.g. Haslam et al., 2002; Rutland & Brown, 2001). Groups that lack social mobility and perceive intergroup relations to be both illegitimate and unstable develop both positive ingroup stereotypes and negative outgroup stereotypes in order to create the necessary ingroup cohesion, ideological justification and relevant targets for collective conflict. In contrast, those in situations of mobility who perceive social relations to be stable and legitimate develop positive ingroup and outgroup stereotypes which allow for positive social comparison, act as a justification for the status quo and subsequently turn people away from collective conflict (Tajfel, 1981).

This study therefore contributes to a body of research that turns away from the idea that stereotypes are simply heuristic devices in favour of the view that they are dynamic *tools* that are a key aspect of groups' *political* relationships with the surrounding intergroup context (Haslam et al., 2002; Oakes et al., 1999; Reynolds et al., 2000; Tajfel, 1981). According to this approach, stereotypes (or social categories) and social context should be seen not as different orders of reality but rather as different moments in an ongoing interactive social and psychological process. This 'process' model of social categories is most clear in longitudinal studies of crowd events, which show how the power of an outgroup to impose its conception of proper practice upon an ingroup becomes the basis for the latter's new identity (Stott et al., 2001). Where this entails transformed identity boundaries, it empowers the ingroup to act against the outgroup and such collective action then engages with social structure by becoming the context within which the outgroup understand themselves. According to this analysis, intergroup dynamics (for example power) are central to the social psychology of collective action and the nature of social identity should therefore not be theorized separately from them (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Reicher, 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Stott & Drury, 2000; Stott & Reicher, 1998).

In the present study, the perceived actions of the high-status group, in denying access to the participants, operated as the basis from which the low-status group formed stereotypes of themselves and of others. These stereotypes in turn were linked to the emergence of collective conflict. Had this process continued, it is possible that such conflict would then be the context from which those in high-status positions formed an understanding of themselves and justified their subsequent actions toward those of low-status (Haslam et al., 2002; Reicher, 1996a; cf. Glick & Fiske, 2001). Therefore a limitation of the current study is the extent to which it has reconstructed these kinds of ongoing intergroup interactions. Although it does go beyond other laboratory-based experimental studies by allowing intragroup interaction over time (Haslam & McGarty, 2001), it precludes a full exploration of the dynamics of intergroup interaction in two ways. First, there was no real outgroup so there is no means of examining their subjective experiences and subsequent actions. Second, and relatedly, the time dimension was limited to just two phases. If we were to address these limitations there would have been more scope for examining how power shifts, how it is psychologically mediated and thus how conflict is provisionally resolved within dynamic frameworks of superiority and subordination. Additionally, it would be useful for future research to address the precise intragroup processes mediating the impact of social structure upon stereotyping and how they affect the impact of information distribution upon stereotype consensualization (Klein et al., in press).

Contrary to expectations, the analysis did not detect any mediating role played by stereotyping in collective protest. Given that such mediation was expected both on theoretical grounds and insofar as similar studies have found such effects, the present results require some explanation. In the first place, as Haslam and McGarty (2003) point out, there are circumstances when mediation should hold but the conditions specified by Baron and Kenny (1986) will not reveal it. Specifically, suppressor variables, which may not have been measured in the study and therefore cannot be entered into the regression equation, may serve to obscure relationships between independent and mediating variables. In the

present case, it might be that some other unmeasured factor—such as emotional inhibition or power—varied across the contextual conditions and thereby served to mask the effects of stereotype consensus and evaluation on preferences for action. Haslam and McGarty (2003) also argue that the technique of statistical mediation is fragile in relying, as it typically does, on the similarity of the mediating and independent variable. In this study post hoc techniques were used to measure stereotype valance and this led to a rather blunt measure, very different to the independent variable, whereby the exact valance given to specific words in the context of the experiment may have remained undetected. Future experiments of this type would certainly benefit from measuring stereotype valance *in situ*. Nonetheless, the stereotypes that developed were linked to the differing forms of social action that emerged and these data are consistent with the argument that groups which are faced with conditions of social change orient themselves toward collective resistance not just by developing negative views of the outgroup but also by focusing upon ingroup consensus.

The manipulation of mobility in this experiment was achieved using techniques developed by Reynolds et al. (2000). This technique potentially confounds perceived mobility with the legitimacy of social relations since those under token and closed conditions were refused entry to the high status group whilst achieving the required grades. However, there were substantial differences between the token and closed conditions suggesting that levels of mobility do have an independent impact. Moreover, the measures of perceived fairness and identification used in this study revealed no significant differences across conditions or phase. However, our intention with this study was not to directly measure the impact of mobility as much as it was to explore the impact of different social structures and in this sense a conflation of mobility and legitimacy may have actually enhanced our experimental manipulation (see Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001, p. 523).

Despite these limitations, the current study suggests that stereotypes, group processes and intergroup dynamics have important inter-relationships that cannot be fully appreciated when each factor is examined in isolation. In this sense it is relevant to draw upon the Gestalt idiom and to argue that when understanding identity as a process the whole *is* greater than the sum of its parts. Moreover, what is only just beginning to be theorized, and which the present paper also supports, is the notion of self or identity not simply as a model of social reality, but as a *project*. Identity is a process not just of being but also of becoming (Reicher, 2000; Spears, Jetten, & Doosje, 2002). According to this view social identity does not simply provide a basis for shared perception and interpretation of the world; it also allows for it to be changed (Reicher, 1996a). This is the case because identity entails conceptions of proper practice: legitimizing notions which the collective subject, to the extent that it has the power, seeks to realize. Our contention is that the relationship between groups, stereotypes and collective action becomes more tractable once we take fully on board the implications of this more dynamic reading of social identity and self-categorization processes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Kate Reynolds, in the design of the experiment and analysis of the data, and two anonymous reviewers for their useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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