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Cross-Dimension-Ambivalent In-Group Stereotypes: The Moderating Roles of Social Context of Stereotype Endorsement and In-Group Identification

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ABSTRACT. In this study, the authors examined in-group stereotypes that are *cross-dimensionally ambivalent*—simultaneously (a) positive in cognition-related content dimensions and negative in affect-related content dimensions or (b) negative in cognition-related content dimensions and positive in affect-related content dimensions—to establish whether endorsement of such in-group stereotypes depends on whether this process occurs in an intragroup versus intergroup context. Drawing on social identity theory, the authors predicted that (a) endorsement of cross-dimension-ambivalent in-group stereotypes would be greater in an intragroup, relative to an intergroup, context and (b) this would hold for high but not low in-group identifiers. Confirming these hypotheses, results showed that endorsement of cross-dimension-ambivalent in-group stereotypes may vary as a function of their contribution to securing a positive social identity.

Keywords: cross-dimension ambivalence, in-group identification, in-group stereotypes, intergroup relations

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSES TO A SOCIAL TARGET can be internally inconsistent (i.e., simultaneously both positively and negatively valenced)—or, in other words, *ambivalent*. The ambivalence construct (Kaplan, 1972; Scott, 1966, 1969) has proven useful in attitude research (e.g., Jonas, Broemer, Diehl, 2000), explaining why an individual can be torn between conflicting views of or feelings about someone or something. In fact, any opposing psychological response can be examined in terms of the amount of ambivalence it elicits. For example, Fong and

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Tiedens (2002) used ambivalence to conceptualize and measure the extent to which goals conflict. Researchers have also used ambivalence to study socially shared views about group members (i.e., stereotypes) that are internally inconsistent.

Traditionally, social psychology researchers have characterized the valence of stereotype content as indiscriminately negative (e.g., Allport, 1954). However, Katz and Hass (1988) found that the positive and negative dimensions of stereotype content are independent of one another. Accordingly, knowing the extent to which someone holds positive beliefs about the members of a given group does not allow researchers to make any inferences about the extent to which that individual holds negative beliefs about the members of the same group. Thus, in statistical terms, contrary to what it would be logical to expect, researchers cannot anticipate finding a negative correlation between the extents to which someone endorses stereotype dimensions of opposite valence. More recent research has indicated that the content of out-group stereotypes may vary in the degree of ambivalence (e.g., Fiske, 1998; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; MacDonald & Zanna, 1998). Such a psychological state would be mirrored by the presence of both positively and negatively valenced beliefs about the members of a given social group (e.g., a non-Italian individual may believe that Italians are both creative and unreliable).

In contrast to the ambivalence of out-group stereotypes, the extent to which the content of in-group stereotypes may be ambivalent has attracted no specific research attention (see Jonas et al., 2000). Accordingly, one important difference between the present study and prior research in this area (e.g., Costarelli, 2006; Eckes, 2005) is its focus on the degree of ambivalence in in-group stereotypes. Mlicki and Ellemers's (1996) finding that group members may endorse a negative rather than the baseline positive stereotype of their own group provides indirect evidence of the prevalence of ambivalent in-group stereotypes.

A further difference between the present study and previous research in this area is that we looked at in-group stereotypes that involve both traits that are cognition-based (e.g., "They are . . . clever, shallow, etc.") and traits that are affect-based (e.g., "They are . . . nice, cold, etc."), which allowed us to explore the differential presence of positivity and negativity across the cognition- and affect-laden dimensions underlying stereotypical beliefs about fellow group members. Specifically, stimulus selection was guided by prior evidence indicating that social and intellectual desirability are the fundamental dimensions along which people form impressions of others (Rosenberg, Nelson, & Vivekanathan, 1968). Researchers have recently reconceptualized these two concepts in a more parsimonious way as saturated with *affect* and *cognition*, respectively—two dimensions that have also been found to be at the core of stereotype content (e.g., Singh & Teoh, 2000). MacDonald and Zanna (1998) used affective and cognitive dimensions of stereotype content to examine the amount of cross-dimension ambivalence that may arise in stereotyping processes. Specifically, they measured the extent to which people endorse *cross-dimension-ambivalent* out-group ste-

reotypes, or those whose content is ambivalent across the cognitive and affective dimensions. For example, one such stereotype of Italians may lead non-Italians to like them because “they really know how to enjoy life” (a positive view in the affective dimension) but, at the same time, to disrespect them because “they are so unreliable” (a negative view in the cognitive dimension). Alternatively, a cross-dimension-ambivalent stereotype may take a form in which the respective valences of the cognitive and affective dimensions are reversed, such as “Italians are so creative . . .” (a positive view in the cognitive dimension) “. . . but also so conservative!” (a negative view in the affective dimension).

Context of Stereotype Endorsement, In-Group Identification, and Ambivalence of In-Group Stereotypes

An important feature of the present study is that we aimed to test the potential moderating roles of (a) the context of stereotype endorsement and (b) in-group identification on the cross-dimension ambivalence of in-group stereotypes. This choice was both theoretically and empirically driven. In regard to the context of stereotype endorsement, previous research has indicated that the content, extremity, and valence of stereotyping trace back to the social context in which stereotyping occurs (e.g., Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to *self-categorization theory* (SCT; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), the perceived positivity of one’s identity partially depends on the social context of self-definition in terms of membership in a social category. However, SCT also assumes that the extent to which a social category can be identity-defining depends on the salience of the category in question (Oakes, 1987). In turn, prior research has indicated that one of the various factors that is capable of heightening the salience of and hence membership in a given social category is whether membership involves social comparison with other relevant categories that are present in the social context (e.g., Brown & Turner, 1981). Wagner and Ward (1993) found that when an in-group and a relevant out-group were the target of a participant’s assessment (i.e., when in-group ratings were expressed in an intergroup context), the positivity the participants ascribed to the in-group increased relative to when the in-group was the only target of the participant’s assessment (i.e., when in-group ratings were expressed in an intragroup context). Because researchers have also found strong evidence that group members secure a positive in-group-derived (i.e., social) identity by establishing the positive distinctiveness of the in-group relative to related out-groups (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986), in the present study we anticipated that such a moderating effect of social context would extend to the positivity and negativity of cross-dimension-ambivalent beliefs concerning members of one’s own group (i.e., in-group stereotypes).

In regard to the potential moderating role of the other factor we considered in our study—in-group identification—previous theoretical and empirical work has highlighted that, in general, the meaning of an intergroup situation differs

between individuals depending on their levels of in-group identification (e.g., Bornman, 1999; Turner, 1978). Specifically, previous research indicates that participants' assessment of their fellow in-group members becomes more positive and less negative (i.e., less cross-dimensionally ambivalent) when an out-group target is introduced into the experimental setting (i.e., in an intergroup context), but only to the extent that participants identify with the in-group (e.g., Doise, Deschamps, & Meyer, 1978; Kelly, 1989; Wagner & Ward, 1993; Wilder, 1984). High in-group identifiers are more likely to be motivated to maintain a positive view of the in-group than are low in-group identifiers (Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Turner). Accordingly, in-group identifiers can also be expected to be more sensitive to the potential value threats to their social identity that their holding an ambivalent stereotype of their own group would represent. Researchers have generally found high in-group identifiers to be more involved with the in-group than are low in-group identifiers (e.g. Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

On the basis of the above considerations, we hypothesized that cross-dimension ambivalence in endorsed in-group stereotypes would be higher in an intragroup than an intergroup context (Hypothesis 1). The rationale behind this prediction is that an intergroup context should increase participants' motivation to endorse nonambivalent stereotypes of their own group. However, we expected that such effects would hold only among participants for whom in-group membership is highly self-relevant: those who identify most strongly with their own group (Hypothesis 2).

Method

Participants

Participants were 64 students from an Italian university (52 women, 12 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 22.25$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 0.36$ years, age range = 19–21 years) who volunteered to take part in this experiment. We randomly allocated them to conditions and randomly distributed sex across conditions. Preliminary analyses revealed no statistically significant effects of sex.

Dependent Measures

We measured *in-group identification* using Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears' (1995) three-item standardized scale. We adopted this measure for the specific in-group in our study, Italians, by substituting the name of this latter group for the one mentioned in the original version of the scale. Participants rated each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*very much*).

For the purpose of this study, we adopted Judd and Park's (1993) definition of *stereotypes* as shared beliefs about the characteristics of members of a social group. Accordingly, and following Verkuyten and Hagendoorn's (1998) research

on endorsement of in-group stereotypes, we assessed in-group stereotypes by asking participants to indicate the extent to which people from their own country (i.e., Italians) had certain characteristics. Jonas and Hewstone (1986) demonstrated that this is a sensitive and reliable method for assessing national in-group stereotypes. We listed 12 descriptive features—6 cognition-laden and 6 affect-laden items—in a different random order for each participant, and participants rated each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all applicable*) to 6 (*extremely applicable*). The items were as follows: positive cognitive items, (a) *interesting*, (b) *to be held in high regard*, and (c) *worthy of approval*; negative cognitive items, (d) *uninteresting*, (e) *to be held in low regard*, and (f) *worthy of disapproval*; positive affective items, (g) *likeable*, (h) *funny*, and (i) *attractive*; and negative affective items, (j) *dislikable*, (k) *sad-making*, and (l) *repulsive*. We chose these items by examining those that previous researchers of intergroup ambivalence have used (e.g., Fiske et al., 2002; Haddock & Zanna, 1999; MacDonald & Zanna, 1998; Mucchi-Faina, Costarelli, & Romoli, 2002). We selected a set of three cognition-laden, positively valenced items and three affect-laden, positively valenced items that seemed appropriate for both intra-group and intergroup assessments of the in-group. We then used a thesaurus to identify antonyms of the initial items. In this way, and following Kaplan (1972), we split each of the typically bipolar semantic-differential scales (see Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) into one positively valenced and one negatively valenced unipolar item, which provided separate rankings of positivity and negativity that enabled us to independently assess participants' ambivalence between each cognition- and affect-laden dimension of their in-group stereotypes. This allowed participants to endorse stereotypes of fellow group members that were positive in one dimension (e.g., *attractive*) and negative in the other (e.g., *worthy of disapproval*). In line with standard practice (e.g., Mucchi-Faina et al.), we pretested the 12 trait-adjective items by asking 20 university students to rate the extent to which each stereotypical trait of the in-group appealed to "emotions and feelings" (i.e., was affect-laden) or to "thoughts and pieces of information" (i.e., was cognition-laden). The pretest participants gave their responses on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*it appeals to thoughts and pieces of information*) to 6 (*it appeals to emotions and feelings*). We chose 6 items that the pretest participants had rated above the scale midpoint of 3.5 as the affect-laden items ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.62$) and 6 that participants had rated below 3.5 as the cognition-laden items ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.51$), $F(1, 19) = 119.47$, $p < .001$, $d = 5.61$.

Procedure

At the beginning of a lecture, a confederate was introduced as a student allegedly from another university (and thus unfamiliar to the participants). Participants then received a questionnaire. At the outset, we told participants that the experiment was part of a larger international research project investigating European

university students' attitudes toward various social objects. Immediately after this brief description of the aim of the study, we asked participants to indicate their age and gender and to complete a measure of in-group identification.

Next, we divided respondents into two groups. We presented to all participants the 12 positive and negative trait-adjective items, which appeared in random order on a list. We asked both groups to rate the extent to which the adjectives applied to people from their own country (*intragroup-context condition*). However, in a subsequent questionnaire, we asked the second group to rate the extent to which the same series of adjectives applied to people from a comparison country (*intergroup-context condition*). This provided a manipulation of the variable of social context of in-group stereotype endorsement. After collecting the questionnaires, we debriefed and thanked participants.

Results

Data Analysis

Preliminary analyses indicated that the positive and negative affect-related and cognition-related ratings formed sufficiently reliable scales. Accordingly, we constructed separate positive and negative indexes. We separately averaged mean scores for each of the positive and negative affect-related and cognition-related items (positive affect-related items: $M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.71$, $\alpha = .79$; negative affect-related items: $M = 1.55$, $SD = 0.73$, $\alpha = .78$; positive cognition-related items: $M = 0.88$, $SD = 0.65$, $\alpha = .74$; negative cognition-related items: $M = 1.98$, $SD = 0.83$, $\alpha = .72$). We then correlated participants' responses on the positive cognition-related items with their responses on the negative cognition-related items. We followed the same procedure for the affect-related items. The emerging negative correlations (r s) were generally modest, ranging from $-.46$ to $-.58$ for the cognition-related items and from $-.46$ to $-.02$ for the affect-related items.

We then calculated the scores for the two existing forms of cross-dimension ambivalence—(a) *negative affect-based and positive cognition-based* (NAPC) and (b) *positive affect-based and negative cognition-based* (PANC)—using Griffin's formula of ambivalence (as reported in Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995): $Ambivalence = [(PA + NA)/2] - |PA - NA|$, in which PA is positive attitude score and NA is negative attitude score. Griffin's formula is based on the two necessary and sufficient conditions of ambivalence (Thompson et al.). First, the two dimensional components must be similar in magnitude: As the similarity in magnitude of the two components decreases, one of them becomes relatively more polarized than the other, which lowers the resulting ambivalence. Second, assuming similarity in magnitude between the two components, ambivalence increases directly with intensity. Thus, "ambivalence can also be thought of as equal to the intensity of the components corrected by the dissimilarity in their magnitude, or, in other words, polarization" (Thompson et al., p. 369).

Because a cross-dimension-ambivalent individual holds attitudes that are polarized in opposite valence directions in the two domains, cross-dimension-ambivalence can be calculated with Griffin's formula by substituting scores in the positively polarized dimension into the second term of the equation ($|PA - NA|$) and scores in the negatively polarized dimension into the first term ($(PA + NA)/2$). Thus, to calculate NAPC cross-dimension ambivalence, we substituted the positive and negative cognitive attitude scores for PA and NA, respectively, in the second term of the equation, and the positive and negative affective attitude scores for PA and NA, respectively, in the first term. Following the same procedure, we calculated PANC cross-dimension ambivalence by substituting affective attitude scores into the second term and cognitive attitude scores into the first term.

For ease of presentation of our data, we added the constant of 10 to each score to avoid negative results. Subsequently, scores range from 1 to 11. Lower scores represent minimal endorsement of the cross-dimension-ambivalent in-group stereotype, indicating that the positive and negative components of the stereotype were only minimally polarized in the same direction on the affective and cognitive dimensions. High scores represent maximal endorsement of the cross-dimension-ambivalent stereotype, indicating that the positive and negative components of the stereotype were maximally polarized in the same direction on the affective and cognitive dimensions.

Cross-Dimensionally Ambivalent In-Group Stereotypes

The mean level of in-group identification was 2.96 ($SD = 0.89$, $\alpha = .81$) with an approximately normal distribution. To rule out the possibility that level of in-group identification varied across experimental conditions, we conducted a preliminary analysis of variance (ANOVA) with in-group identification as a dependent variable and context of in-group stereotype endorsement as the independent variable. We did not find any effect of context of in-group stereotype endorsement, $F(1, 63) = 3.39$, $p = .88$, $\eta^2 = .04$.

We had predicted that the cross-dimension ambivalence characterizing the participants' endorsement of the in-group stereotype would be stronger in the intra-group, relative to the intergroup, context (Hypothesis 1). We also had expected that this effect would be revealed for high but not low in-group identifiers (Hypothesis 2). To test these predictions, we entered in-group identification (treated as a continuous variable) in two separate between-participants mixed-model ANOVAs that analyzed the effects of comparative context of in-group stereotype endorsement on NAPC and PANC cross-dimension ambivalence, respectively. We found a main effect of context on endorsement of NAPC cross-dimension ambivalence, $F(1, 63) = 4.66$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .07$. The predicted crucial interaction effect also emerged as statistically significant, $F(1, 63) = 5.87$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .09$. We did not find any other effects.

To analyze the nature of this interaction, we used simple main effect analyses (see Table 1) to compare the effects of in-group-stereotype-endorsement context

TABLE 1. Mean Ratings of Negative Affect-Based and Positive Cognition-Based Cross-Dimension Ambivalence for High and Low In-Group Identification Participants as a Function of Comparative Context of In-Group Assessment

Comparative context	In-group identification			
	Low		High	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intragroup	6.72 _a	1.51	6.81 _a	1.60
Intergroup	6.70 _a	1.22	4.72 _b	2.20

Note. Different subscripts indicate significant ($p < .05$) differences between means according to relevant tests of simple main effects.

on participants from the two (high and low) in-group identification conditions (as identified through a median split on the in-group identification score). As predicted, the cross-dimension ambivalence characterizing high identifiers' endorsement of the in-group stereotype was stronger in the intragroup-, relative to the intergroup-, context condition, $F(1, 30) = 5.32, p = .03, \eta^2 = .04$. By contrast, cross-dimension ambivalence characterizing low identifiers' endorsement of the in-group stereotype was as strong in the intragroup- as in the intergroup-context condition, $F(1, 33) = 0.003, p = .94, \eta^2 = .01$.

We also found a significant main effect of context on endorsement of PANC cross-dimension ambivalence, $F(1, 63) = 4.68, p = .04, \eta^2 = .07$. However, the predicted crucial interaction (the effect of interest) was not statistically significant, $F(1, 63) = 2.20, p = .095, \eta^2 = .01$.

Discussion

Our results are in line with the findings of Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) and subsequent social identity and self-categorization theorists who have traced the content, extremity, and valence of stereotyping processes to the context in which these processes occur (e.g., Hogg & Abrams, 1988). These findings suggest that an individual may not experience psychological inconsistency while endorsing a cross-dimension-ambivalent stereotype of the in-group if this stereotype helps secure a relatively positive social identity.

Our Hypothesis 2 received support for the NAPC form of cross-dimension-ambivalent in-group stereotypes but not for the PANC form. This asymmetry suggests that evidence from attitude research can be extended to the domain of stereotypes. Specifically, the pattern in our results is in line with prior research showing that negatively valenced information affects the formation of psychological ambivalence more strongly than does positively valenced information

(Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994). According to Leyens and Yzerbyt (1992), this occurs because information is more diagnostic when it is of negative rather than positive valence. This pattern is also consistent with evidence from research on intergroup-judgement processes (e.g., Singh, Choo, & Poh, 1998; Singh, Sharmini, & Choo, 2004; Yee & Brown, 1992). Researchers in that area have demonstrated that people view their mental ability to process affective data as more informative than their ability to process cognitive impressions (Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1994). Thus, affect-based information carries more weight in people's judgmental operations than does cognition-based information (Vescio, Hewstone, Crisp, & Rubin, 1999). In the present study, participants may have centered around the psychologically stronger dimension (the affect-laden one) in their cross-dimension-ambivalent in-group stereotype.

Because the self is typically evaluated positively (e.g. Baumeister, 1998), one's self-categorization as a member of a certain group should imply that, as a default, one will positively evaluate that group (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993). When one positively evaluates one's own group, the high negativity that ambivalence embodies about the attitude object (i.e., the group) should reflect on the affect experienced by individuals who are highly ambivalent toward their own group. This is consistent with previous evidence that a more ambivalent attitude toward the in-group evokes greater psychological discomfort among high in-group identifiers but not low in-group identifiers (e.g., Costarelli & Palmonari, 2003). Thus, holding an ambivalent stereotype about one's own group may also affect self-esteem. Future researchers should therefore explore the self-relevant consequences of ambivalence in group members' endorsements of in-group stereotypes.

One limitation of the present study is that female respondents outnumbered male respondents. We attempted to minimize bias that this could have produced in our hypothesis testing by calculating sums of squares with the one method that is invariant with respect to the cell frequencies of the tested ANOVA models: Type III (in SPSS Version 7.5). However, further research is necessary to ascertain whether there was an interaction effect between participant sex and the variables of interest that our statistical analyses may not have revealed because of this limitation in statistical power. Also, future researchers should attempt to minimize the potential consistency bias in participants' responses yielded by Kaplan's (1972) method of calculating ambivalence, which we used in this study and which requires participants to rate univalent positive and negative item scales that contain terms and their respective opposites (antonyms). Researchers may be able to overcome this potential limitation by randomly administering to each participant one of two sets of split semantic differential scales in which items of either valence are listed separately from their respective opposite terms (i.e., each participant receives only positive and negative item scales that are not derived from the same split semantic differential scale). To check for the potential influence of participants' rating different sets of split semantic differential scales,

researchers should counterbalance the order of set ratings. Inclusion of this factor in the design of the study could subsequently allow researchers to assess its effects by considering it as a blocking variable in the statistical models.

AUTHOR NOTES

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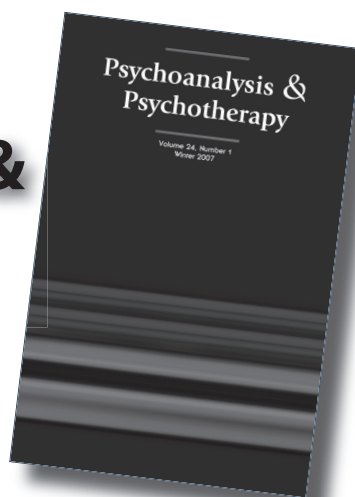
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