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IN-GROUP ATTACHMENT AND GLORIFICATION, PERCEPTIONS OF COGNITION-BASED AMBIVALENCE AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROUP, AND POSITIVE AFFECT

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ABSTRACT

One study examined modes of social identification ('attachment' to the group and in-group 'glorification') that can lead people to experience positive psychological consequences from their cognition-based ambivalent evaluations of the in-group. As expected, among highly attached participants, cognitive in-group ambivalence predicted a stronger perception of their ambivalent views about fellow group members as a personal contribution to the in-group. By contrast, among highly glorifying participants, cognitive in-group ambivalence predicted a weaker perception of their ambivalent views about fellow group members as a personal contribution to the in-group. Besides, among highly attached but not highly glorifying participants, cognitive in-group ambivalence elicited a positive affective response. These findings point to the importance of taking both group members' individual differences in facets of social identification and the cognitive components of their in-group ambivalence into account when considering reactions to holding such ambivalent attitude because these factors can moderate these effects.

INTRODUCTION

When people hold simultaneously positive and negative attitudes towards their own group, in-group evaluation is ambivalent (Scott, 1966, 1969; for reviews, see Jonas, Brömer, & Diehl, 2000; Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995). The attitudinal inconsistency may regard group-related emotions (affectively-based ambivalence) or beliefs (cognitively-based ambivalence). This study aims to contribute to research on social identity theory by investigating how individual variation in modes of social identification and ambivalence about the in-group impacts on subsequent positive affect and perceptions of such ambivalence.

Ambivalence as Criticism about the Group

Based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), the evaluation of one's own group is uncritical by default because individuals strive for a (unambivalently) positive self-image (Sedikides, 1993). This suggests that only people who also evaluate negatively, and thus can be characterized as being ambivalent towards, fellow group members can be expected to develop critical views about them.

Individual Differences in Modes of Ingroup Identification (Attachment and Glorification), and In-group Ambivalence

On the one hand, strongly identified members can be expected to behave in a manner that, in their estimation, is likely to most benefit the group (Louis, Louis, Taylor, & Douglas, 2005). This suggests that criticism regarding beliefs (i.e. cognitively-based ambivalence) about the group should affect more *positively* high identifiers' emotional response, compared with low identifiers. This should be the case because one's ambivalent view of the in-group is perceived as constructive criticism while ideally aiming to change the group for better (see Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999).

On the other hand, based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), group identification should be negatively related to maintaining an ambivalent cognitive representation of the in-group because individuals strive for a (unambivalently) positive self-image (Sedikides, 1993). Consistent with this rationale, prior research shows that expressing ambivalence in cognitions (beliefs) about one's own group influences *negatively* high identifiers' emotional response (e.g., Costarelli, 2011; Costarelli & Sanitioso, 2012).

However, a two-mode conceptualization of in-group identification has recently been proposed by Roccas and colleagues (Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2006). According to it, social identification is composed of *glorification* of the group and *attachment* to it — two partially overlapping tendencies that have been found as positively related in prior research (e.g., Roccas et al., 2006). While glorification is defined as viewing one's own group as superior to outgroups and as a legitimate authority to be respected, attachment reflects defining oneself in terms of membership in a group that is important to the self and to which one is committed.

In the current investigation, we reasoned that individuals who view their group's status as superior to that of others and who tout its outstanding qualities (i.e. high glorifiers) should experience distress if this vision of their own group's supremacy is marred by the fact that there are also negative aspects to the in-group. This should not be the case for those individuals who consider their membership in the group as being important to the self (i.e. highly attached individuals) but who are in principle willing to accept that there is 'good and bad' within their group. Rather, these individuals should be willing to embrace their negative view of their fellow group members in order to improve their own group (*constructive patriotism*: Schatz et al., 1999).

On the basis of the theoretical work reviewed above (Roccas et al., 2006; Schatz et al., 1999;

Staub, 1997), we expect these two different facets of identification to have *opposing* relations to a range of group-relevant reactions to ambivalence towards the in-group.

In a related vein, Costarelli (2015) showed that those participants who were highly attached to their group did not feel negatively when their beliefs about the group were not uniquely positive but also negative (i.e. ambivalent).

This study also found in-group attachment to be positively related to viewing one's ambivalent beliefs about the in-group as a contribution to the group. This suggests that those who are cognitively and emotionally involved with their group (highly attached individuals) are to some extent also concerned with its shortcomings and are therefore prone to vent out 'pros and cons' regarding their group as a personal contribution to its betterment.

As opposed to those for highly attached individuals, Costarelli (2015) also showed the negative affective response of high glorifiers' acknowledgment of pitfalls and defaults in their group via the expression of their cognitive ambivalence towards the in-group (also see Costarelli, 2011; Costarelli & Sanitioso, 2012).

Hypotheses

On the basis of this prior theoretical and empirical work, we tested the following hypotheses in a correlational study:

H1: Among highly attached participants, cognitively-based in-group ambivalence will be positively related to subsequent positive affect, and;

H2: such effects will not be found among strongly glorifying participants.

H3: Among strongly attached participants, cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group will be positively related to perceptions of cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group as contributing to the group.

H4: Among strongly glorifying participants, cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group will be negatively related to perceptions of cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group as contributing to the group.

METHOD

Participants and Design

Ninety volunteers (52 women; age: $M = 43.42$, $SD = 11.45$, range: 20-63; 38 men; age: $M = 40.13$, $SD = 12.63$, range: 16-62) took part in the study. The in-group was defined as people from the same country as the participants (i.e. Italians).

Procedure and Measures

Participants received an introduction page and a questionnaire. The introduction page presented the study as part of a larger research project allegedly investigating European workers' attitudes towards various social objects. In the questionnaire, Italians (i.e. participants' national fellow

group members) was the target in-group. Participants were asked to write down, in the first page of the questionnaire, their responses to the ‘attachment’ (e.g., “Being an Italian is an important part of my identity”) and ‘glorification’ (e.g., “Italians are better than people from other countries in all respects”) scales developed by Roccas et al. (2006), as adapted for the current target in-group. The responses were given on a continuum ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The attachment (Cronbach’s Alpha = .77; $M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.14$) and glorification (Alpha = .81; $M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.09$) scales proved to be reliable and were thus averaged into two separate composite scores.

Then, participants were presented with measures of cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group. Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which each item fitted their thoughts about the members of the in-group as a group and not as single individuals. Attitudes were expressed along a 7-point unipolar scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Formula-based ambivalence toward the in-group was operationalized as responses to each of a list of 8 randomly-ordered adjective items purportedly concerning members of the target in-group. Following Kaplan (1972), this measure was obtained by splitting each of four typically bipolar semantic differential scales into two unipolar items. Thus, one unipolar item assessed the endorsement of the positive pole of the bipolar scale (e.g. *Italians: are not at all likeable*), whereas the other unipolar item measured the endorsement of the negative pole of the bipolar scale (e.g. *Italians: are not at all dislikeable /extremely dislikeable*). This operation resulted in eight unipolar items differing in valence.

The items were in fact components of 4 pairs of antonyms. Four unipolar items were components of four cognitively-based pairs of antonyms (i.e. *precise-superficial*) aimed at assessing cognitively-based positive and negative attitudes toward the in-group. All antonyms were evaluative in nature. However, consistent with the suggestion of Crites, Fabrigar, and Petty (1994), the cognitively-based antonyms were focused on the instrumental characteristics of in-group members. For positively-valenced items a low rating implied less favorability toward the target groups than a high rating; for negatively-valenced items a low rating implied less unfavourability toward the target groups than a high rating. In this way, separate ranking of positivity and negativity simultaneously allowed participants’ reports to indicate that they had both positive and negative attitudes to members of the target groups. This methodological artifice allowed us to calculate the measure of ambivalence that we used in this

Ratings of the in-group expressed on the positively- and the negatively-valenced items were moderately correlated ($r_s = -0.47$). Therefore, the computation of in-group ambivalence appeared methodologically justified. Among the various existing indices (see Thompson et al., 1995, for a comparative review), the Griffin’s formulation was used to calculate ambivalence (as per Thompson et al., 1995). This formula produces a score that is a function of the simultaneous intensity of the positive and negative ratings, $(P+N)/2 - |P-N|$, where P = positive attitude score, and N = negative attitude score. Thus, cognitively-based in-group ambivalence scores were computed for each participant. The cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group index proved to be reliable (Alpha = .86, $M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.24$) and was thus averaged into a composite score.

The assessment of participants' perceptions concerning the contribution to the in-group of holding ambivalent beliefs concerning one's own group followed. To this end, one randomly-ordered two-item scale was used for each attitude domain (*Viewing nationals in a mixed / both positive and negative way can contribute to one's own national group*). The responses were given on a continuum ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale items showed good internal consistency and were thus averaged into a composite score of contribution to the in-group of one's own cognitively-based in-group ambivalence ($\text{Alpha} = .76, M = 4.42, SD = 1.48$).

Finally, on the following page of the questionnaire, participants were administered the positive affect measure. Positive affect was assessed with an affect adjective list. This list was modeled after the circumplex model of affective experiences developed by Watson and Tellegen (1985). Specifically, we included those affect adjective items that have been used in past research to measure positive affectivity resulting from goal achievement (e.g., Kunzman & Baltes, 2003). This choice was driven by the fact that this specific dimension of positive affect taps on the hypothesized potential for cognitively-based in-group ambivalence to evoke positive affect because of its achieving the psychological goal of contributing the in-group. For this reason, participants' negative affective response was not expected to have any predictive value and was therefore not assessed.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each of three positive emotion adjectives (*glad, proud, satisfied*) applied to how they were feeling. Participants were instructed not to think too much about their ratings and instead to give quick, gut-level responses. This precise indication was meant as providing respondents with the sense that they should not experience any guilt with respect to their prior evaluation of the in-group. Finally, a positive affect index was constructed by averaging each participant's score for the items. This choice was validated by the results of a Principal components analysis on the emotion items. A one-factor solution was extracted accounting for 60% of the variance. All factor loadings exceeded .87. Furthermore, this combined measure had a very good internal consistency ($\text{Alpha} = .80$). This was examined as a dependent variable ($M = 4.63, SD = 1.09$).

Finally, participants were asked to indicate their age and gender. Before leaving, participants were fully debriefed and thanked.

RESULTS

There were no gender main or interaction effects, and these will not be discussed further. Preliminary correlation analyses ascertained that the cognitive ambivalence index did not correlate with in-group attachment or glorification (r_s 0.12 and -0.08, respectively), thus allowing us to use them as independent variables in a general linear model (GLM) procedure. To this end, in-group glorification and attachment as well as cognition-based in-group ambivalence were mean-centered (Aiken and West, 1991). The GLM procedure outputs F values instead of t values, but it is equivalent to using a regression procedure with effect coding of dichotomous variable(s).

In two separate univariate analyses using the GLM described earlier, we treated the scores for positive affect and perceived contribution to the group of cognitively-based in-group ambivalence as a dependent variable. Following the procedure used in prior research on in-group attachment and glorification (e.g., Roccas et al., 2006), controlling for each of the two identification mode when examining the interaction effects of the other identification mode with in-group ambivalence, in the following analyses it will be possible to isolate the interaction effects of attachment without glorification (and vice versa) and in-group ambivalence on the dependent measures.

Positive Affect

Using the GLM described earlier, no significant main effects emerged, $F_s(1, 89) < 3.89, p_s > .09$. As also expected, while the cognition-based ambivalence X glorification interaction was not significant, $F(1, 89) = -1.83, p = .070$, the cognition-based ambivalence X attachment interaction was statistically significant, $F(1, 89) = 2.21, p = .030$.

As predicted, cognition-based in-group ambivalence did not affect positive affect among scarcely attached participants (1 *SD* below the mean), $B = .06, t = 0.64, p = .52$, but it positively influenced positive affect among highly attached participants (1 *SD* above the mean), $B = .40, t = 2.53, p = .015$. The related correlation coefficients in these two subsamples were statistically different from each other, $Z = -1.64, p = .050, one-tailed$. All higher-order interactions between the independent variables were not statistically significant, $F_s(1, 89) < 1.25, p_s > .26$.

Perceived contribution to the group of cognitively-based in-group ambivalence

On this score, using the GLM described earlier, as predicted, a main effect of in-group attachment emerged, $F(1, 89) = 5.10, p = .026$, such that participants perceived their cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group to be contributing to the group to the extent that their cognition-based in-group ambivalence was greater, $B = .31, t = 2.26, p = .026$.

No other main effects were statistically significant, $F_s(1, 89) < 1.13, p_s > .29$. In line with predictions, the cognition-based in-group ambivalence X attachment interaction was not significant, $F(1, 89) = 0.27, p = .87$, while the cognition-based in-group ambivalence X glorification interaction was statistically significant, $F(1, 89) = 8.78, p = .004$.

Weakly glorifying participants (1 *SD* below the mean) perceived their cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group to be contributing to the group to the extent that their cognition-based in-group ambivalence was greater, $B = .40, t = 2.37, p = .022$. By contrast, strongly glorifying participants (1 *SD* above the mean) perceived their cognition-based ambivalence towards the in-group to be less contributing to the group to the extent that their cognition-based in-group ambivalence was greater, $B = -0.38, t = -2.19, p = .034$. All higher-order interactions were not statistically significant, $F_s(1, 89) < 1.26, p_s > .27$.

DISCUSSION

The current data complement prior evidence on the psychological implications of individual differences in facets of in-group identification by highlighting the opposing valence of the psychological consequences of being ambivalent towards one's group for high glorifiers and highly attached individuals.

Specifically, while being consistent with previous theoretical work (e.g., Packer, 2008; Roccas et al., 2006; Schatz & Staub, 1997; Staub, 1997) and prior research (e.g., Costarelli, 2011, 2015; Costarelli & Sanitioso, 2012), these findings are novel in that they constitute the first demonstration of the role played by cognitive in-group ambivalence in those perceptions related to contributing to the betterment of one's own group. Taken together, the results from the present study suggest that highly attached individuals with ambivalent beliefs about the in-group perceive such ambivalence as an attitude that other group members will view as being a defensible, balanced, and realistic reaction to their appraisal of both the positive and the negative stereotypic traits of the in-group, which ultimately can contribute to the group. As a consequence, this appears to provide highly attached individuals with sufficient "rational" justification to be overtly ambivalent towards fellow group members. Importantly, this suggests that the greater subsequent levels of positive affect that highly attached members experience after expressing such in-group ambivalence reflects their feeling safe at overtly showing an otherwise sanctioned form of in-group attitude.

In conclusion, we have sought to demonstrate that far from the reasonable, balanced bit of cultural knowledge they are often treated as, ambivalent attitudes that are based on beliefs about in-group members may represent a clandestine means proliferating social beliefs about the in-group that ultimately can counter the status quo with respect to critical aspects of in-group members. When we consider the extent to which ambivalent attitudes are often seamlessly integrated into public discourse, the implications of these findings seem significant indeed. Importantly, the present research demonstrates the extent to which ambivalent attitudes regarding stereotypic traits of the in-group may be uniquely capable at not only voicing evaluations that those members who strongly "glorify" the in-group eschew as self-threatening but also at facilitating the development of critical views on the in-group that may contribute to its betterment over time for the more "attached" members. These important, differential consequences of cognitive in-group ambivalence for in-group attitudes may help to interpret the often encountered "blocked" condition that prevents many groups to undergo changing for better by getting rid of their problematic aspects over time.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among the Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. In-group attachment		-	
2. In-group glorification	0.39*	-	
3. Cognitive ambivalence	0.12	-0.06	-
<i>M</i>	4.81	3.69	2.55
<i>SD</i>	1.14	1.09	1.24

NOTE: $N = 90$

* = $p < 0.05$

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