

Refining the cognitive redefinition of the group: Deindividuation effects in common bond vs. common identity groups

Although social identity theory and self-categorization theory have been very successful in some areas of group theory, most notably that of intergroup relations, the idea that these theories would also account for a wide range of small group effects (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1987b; Turner, 1991) has met with a less favorable press. The present study aims to shed some light on the apparent lack of success of both theories in small groups by contrasting social influence exerted in small groups by interpersonal/interdependence factors with influence exerted by the group's social identity. Based on the distinction between common bond and common identity groups (Prentice, Miller, & Lightdale, 1994) we argue that different forms of social influence predominate in each type of group. Moreover, we aim to show that these influences will impact on social behavior in different ways, to the extent that they require different conditions under which their influence can be maximized.

The Success of Social Identity in Some Parts of Social Psychology

One of the remarkable developments in social psychological research and theory over the past decade has been the rise of social identity theory and self-categorization theory in research on groups. One reason why the success of these theories may be called remarkable, is that they aim to present a *unified* general theory which accounts for most if not all social psychological phenomena. They achieve this by maintaining that the social aspects of one's identity that are informative and influential are similar across identities and groups. Indeed, it cannot be denied that the theory's influence has been felt across multiple topics, sometimes in multiple disciplines. Indeed the utility of SIT and SCT has been obvious in areas such as stereotyping, prejudice, ingroup bias, minority influence, aspects of the attitude literature, and the psychology of the self. This is quite remarkable in a field that is characterized by theories which are often narrowly confined to specific variables of interest.

The reason that SIT and SCT are able to present a unified theory is rooted in their 'redefinition of the group.' One of the important premises of this redefinition is that the mechanisms which underlie our dealings with the social environment should apply equally well to all groups: to small groups, to larger institutions, to minimal groups, and to abstract social categories. For example, Tajfel argued that there were

three aspects to social identity and proposed that these ‘three aspects of group membership [...] — the cognitive, the evaluative and the emotional — can be made to apply *equally well to small groups and to large social categories*’ (Tajfel, 1978, p. 29, emphasis added). This assumption that small groups and large social categories are governed by fundamentally similar psychological processes is also a core feature of SCT: what matters is that social influence results from ‘the transformation of individuals into a psychological group’ (Turner, 1991, p. 160), not the nature of the group. Social influence, in turn, is exerted by general principles governing dealings with any group, and by the cognitive representation (or possibly construction, see Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994) of the group. Of course these principles (for example the accentuation of intergroup differences) and a specific cognitive representation should exist for groups irrespective of their size or nature. Moreover, SCT argues that many characteristics of small groups at the individual level (such as interpersonal attraction among group members) are the actual result of identification with the group *as an entity*, rather than attraction forming the basis of group formation or group existence, as many small group researchers have argued (Hogg, 1992; Turner, 1991).

Yet despite the success of these theories in the fields mentioned above, we believe they fail to have accounted for an important — maybe even central — area in social psychology. It is striking that support for SIT and SCT has been most forthcoming in areas and paradigms which require *no direct interaction* within groups. Moreover, studies have tended to support these theories particularly in studies of *intergroup relations*. However, one area in which support has not been especially forthcoming — and admittedly this kind of gross generalization does not do justice to some individual studies — is the area of small group relations, which compounds what seem to be the properties of paradigms at which SIT/SCT is at a disadvantage: Small group research tends to involve interaction and it tends to present an intragroup rather than intergroup context.

In sum, SCT and SIT have been particularly successful in explaining group processes at the level of cognitions about groups and intergroup relations, but their success in the realm of especially intragroup interaction has been rather minimal. That this is problematic may appear from Turner’s (1987a) assertion that one central paradigm in the study of intragroup processes, the group polarization paradigm, is the ‘testing ground for alternative meta-theories of the relationship of the individual to the group’ (p. 88.) He argued that this was the case because in the polarization paradigm the interpersonal and social identity explanations of social influence may be directly pitted against each other. The fact that support for SCT has not been especially strong for SCT in this paradigm (see below) is noteworthy because it suggests that in one area, that of small groups, the ideal of a ‘grand unified theory’ of groups breaks down.

In the present paper, we aim to resolve some of the problems which face SCT in the small group domain. In doing so, we also aim to resolve some of the problems which face interpersonal explanations of small group behavior. We do so by exploring the theoretical and empirical utility of making a distinction between different types of groups. Thereby, we hope to reconcile some of the divergent findings in

this literature. We will first outline some empirical findings which provided the impetus for the present research and which we believe to be problematic for SCT, and then some empirical findings which are puzzling for an interpersonal account of small group behavior. We then proceed by presenting a theoretical account which may resolve both of these issues, and finally present an empirical test of this proposal.

Small Group Investigations: Prospects and Problems for sct and for Interpersonal Explanations

One area which has originally been central to SCT is that of group polarization. Several social psychologists have claimed to have solved the issues that were raised by group polarization research, emphasizing that social comparison and particularly informational influences were contributing to this effect (e.g., Isenberg, 1986). Research has further demonstrated that the predominance of each mode of social influence is determined by contextual factors such as the type of issue under discussion (Kaplan & Miller, 1987). However, SCT theorists stressed that many findings did not square with these conclusions, and that a simple reconciliation of informational and normative influences was unsatisfactory (Turner, 1991; Wetherell, 1987). Indeed some of the findings in the polarization literature appear to be puzzling, such as demonstrations that polarization may occur without the exchange of any information whatsoever: Informational influence has difficulty accounting for polarization without the exchange of arguments. Conversely, social comparison theories have trouble accounting for studies in which 'fake norms' were provided to groups, which proved to be sufficient to induce attitude change. SCT provided an explanation for these polarization effects which claimed it could explain all of them (including impacts of type of issue), and which relied on implicit comparisons of each group with either explicit or implicit outgroups. Group members, SCT argued, inferred a polarized norm from this comparison, and this provided the impetus for attitude change.

In the tests of this proposal, however, the evidence for the SCT account of polarization has been most forthcoming in studies in which the *inter-group* context was made salient (Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990; Turner, Wetherell, & Hogg, 1989; Van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1988; Van Knippenberg, de Vries, & Van Knippenberg, 1990). Other studies have demonstrated that persuasive arguments coming from ingroup members are more likely to induce attitude change and perceptions of a polarized group norm (Mackie & Cooper, 1984; Mackie, 1986; Wilder, 1990). However, none of these studies used a traditional group polarization paradigm which involves interaction within a small group of people *without* explicit reference to an outgroup. The studies designed to test SCT's proposal in these traditional contexts have not been able to demonstrate reliable polarization, and it has been argued that SCT does not find support in such paradigms because 'members of such *ad hoc* groups are unlikely to feel much cohesiveness or sense of identity' (McGarty, Turner, Hogg, David, & Wetherell, 1992, p. 16). What this ignores is the fact that most of the studies which show attitude polarization or choice shifts actually deploy

very similar ad hoc groups and similar paradigms to the ones in which SCT fails to find significant support (Isenberg, 1986; Myers & Lamm, 1976). Thus, it would appear that not all group polarization is explained adequately by SCT, and therefore that SCT and its sister-theory SIT can not live up to the expectation that they entirely explain social influence in the small group.

The obvious response to the lack of support for SIT and SCT would be to question their generality. Apparently, the social influence observed in small groups and the way it is exerted are of a fundamentally different nature to those observed and exerted by different groups such as social categories or minimal groups. Indeed, many other central theories of social influence in small groups focus on mechanisms of social influence that are radically different from social identity's. Generally, social influence in small groups is assumed to be rooted in the direct group member-to-group member contact that is characteristic of small groups. For example, social influence has been related to interpersonal attraction (Lott & Lott, 1965), interdependence between group members (e.g., Lewin, 1948/1997), social pressure in the form of normative influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955), or immediacy of interaction between members of a group (Latané, 1981; Latané & Nida, 1980). Thus, unlike SCT and SIT, many other theories of social influence argue that the types of influence found in small groups are related to a property which they do *not share with social categories or minimal groups*: the fact that small groups depend on direct interpersonal interaction and contact.

However, the importance of direct interpersonal interaction for explaining social influence in small groups is questioned by recent findings examining the impact of individuation and deindividuation in small groups. In particular, there is growing evidence that individuation may be associated with decreased influence of group norms, whereas conditions of deindividuation — in which the interaction between group members is much less direct and interpersonal — sometimes lead to an actual increase in the influence of group norms (see Spears, this volume, and Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1999 for reviews). Thus, with regard to a central dimension of social influence there appears to be convergent evidence that in certain social contexts proximate interpersonal conditions may be detrimental to producing strong social influence in some groups. Moreover, these studies have highlighted the importance of social identity and the norms derived from it in explaining why these paradoxical effects were obtained (e.g., Postmes & Spears, 1998; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995; Spears, Lea, & Lee, 1990).

In sum, SIT and SCT have difficulty in finding proof for their suggestion that polarization towards a group norm should occur in small groups, and this suggests that alternative (interpersonal) models of social influence are more appropriate to small groups. Conversely, interpersonal influences have difficulty accounting for findings of strong social influence when group members are deindividuated, and it has been argued that influence exerted by social identity may account for this phenomenon. The question that emerges from this, then, is when and why different types of social influence should dominate small group processes. We believe that this issue may be resolved by taking into account a fundamental distinction between types of small groups.

Common Bond and Common Identity groups

The distinction we propose is analogous to Prentice and colleagues (1994). They argued for a distinction between common bond and common identity groups. Common bond groups are groups which revolve around the interpersonal relationships between the groups' members. Thus, these groups exist by virtue of attraction of group members to each other. Examples of this type of group would be friends that go on a weekend together, or other socializing groups. In contrast, common identity groups are 'more similar to Tajfel's minimal groups, in which attachment to the group is largely independent of attachment to fellow group members. In these groups, the strength of group attachment should depend first and foremost on one's commitment to the identity of the group' (Prentice et al., 1994, p. 485). We would like to extend this definition, and propose that what defines a common identity group is that its members are differentiated from a 'background' (the population at large or a specific comparison group) by a property (or set of properties) that they have in common with the group. This property may be an attribute (e.g., a skin color), attitude (e.g., a political persuasion), a common interest or goal (e.g., at work), or combinations of these, but importantly it is *not* the fact that the people in the group like each other or are similar *as individuals*. Rather, members of common identity groups share — to a varying degree — a property of the group which exists at a *supra-individual level*, and this property is the primary reason for the group's existence or formation.

Although not explicitly elaborated on by Prentice and colleagues, we believe that this distinction has obvious but important consequences for social influence exerted within the group. We expect that interpersonal influences dominate in common bond groups. These groups exist by virtue of interpersonal relationships, hence relationships form the nucleus of this group, and the power exerted by the group over its members stems directly from them. Conversely, we expect that influence is exerted by the social identity in common identity groups. Personal relationships are unimportant in this type of group: That which defines the group is a supra-individual property which sets the group apart from its comparative context. Hence, any influence of the group over its members stems — by definition — from this property, which is psychologically represented in group members' social identity (their image of the group's self-stereotype).

In sum, we propose to investigate the impact of 'group types' on social influence exerted in small groups. We expect that interpersonal influence is most strongly felt in common bond groups, whereas the influence exerted by social identity is particular to common identity groups. We examine this by using a computer-mediated communication paradigm. As noted previously, research in this paradigm has demonstrated that social influence exerted by social identity may be particularly strong under conditions of de-individuation. We now propose that these findings are particular to groups which share a common identity. Therefore we expect, consistent with SIT and SCT, that social influence is strongest in common identity groups when its members are deindividuated (Postmes & Spears, 1998; Reicher et al., 1995; Spears & Lea, 1992). However, we expect that common bond groups would show a

different impact of deindividuation, namely that deindividuation diminishes social influence. This prediction is consistent with some theories of social influence in small groups which are based on interpersonal influence mechanisms (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Diener, 1980; Latané & Nida, 1980; Lott & Lott, 1965) which imply or propose that influence should increase with the degree to which direct interpersonal contact is possible.

Overview

The study consisted of an orthogonal experimental manipulation of two independent variables: deindividuation and group type. These manipulations, and all subsequent treatment, measures, and analyses, were conducted at the level of the group. Expectations were that social influence would depend on experimental conditions in such a way that an interaction between treatments would be obtained. In particular, it was expected that social influence would be strong in common bond groups especially if members were individuated, and less strong when members were deindividuated. Conversely, social influence in common identity groups was expected to be stronger in deindividuated groups compared with individuated groups. These predictions were investigated in a group polarization paradigm where students debated issues on which a clear student norm existed, and on which most students were of similar opinion (agreement or disagreement). The degree to which groups were polarized towards the norm after discussion was the main index of social influence.

Method

Participants and Design. Undergraduate students participated in exchange for course credit. They were randomly assigned to 32 groups of three persons, and each group was assigned to an experimental condition. Due to failure of the discussion software, two groups could not complete the study, and were discarded. The design was a 2 (de-individuation: de-individuated vs. individuated) X 2 (group type: common bond vs. common identity) factorial design. Eight groups were placed in each common identity condition, and seven in each common bond condition. De-individuation was manipulated by not displaying any individuating information on the computer displays during the group discussions in the deindividuated condition, making participants relatively anonymous to each other. In the individuated condition, however, participants saw pictures of the other group members and of themselves on the screen. The manipulation of group type was achieved through an elaborate false-feedback procedure, in which participants were ostensibly assigned to a common bond or a common identity group.

Procedure. In order to manipulate deindividuation successfully, participants were selected who did not know each other prior to the experiment. Moreover, two or three groups of participants were present in the laboratory simultaneously, so that the ostensible assignment to common bond or common identity groups would be credible.

Upon entering the laboratory, each participant was individually escorted to an isolated cubicle, where a digitized picture was taken. In the cubicle stood an Apple Performa PC, via which the entire experiment took place. After giving brief instructions about PC usage, the experimenter left the cubicle and participants received their instructions via the PC.¹

Participants were told that the present experiment was concerned with 'online behavior of personal bond² and common identity groups.' Then, participants were informed that personal bond groups exist because group members like and value each other: members have a mutual bond, as in a group of friends for example. It was also explained to participants that in common identity groups these personal friendships are less important. Common identity groups, they were told, exist because its members share a common outlook or unite behind a common goal, as is the case in political parties for example. The understanding of these instructions was verified with two multiple choice questions about the nature of each group type. If they answered incorrectly, participants received the instructions again.

After this background information about group types, the actual manipulation took place. Participants were informed that the computer would subject them to a test that would match them with their group, and this could be either a common bond or a common identity group. In the common bond condition, participants completed an impressive-looking personality checklist, requiring them to select eight of 40 adjectives that described them best, and then to rank-order these by their importance. Subsequently, they did the same for their two best friends or acquaintances. They were informed that prior research had generated 'group profiles' on the basis of which they would now be 'matched' with a group consisting of people 'who could well have been close personal friends. Thus, you are matched with a personal bond group.' No information was given about how the matching took place, and in reality allocation of participants was entirely random.

In the common identity condition, participants were required to complete a personal and political values questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 43 statements about various societal and political issues, with which participants could state their agreement or disagreement on 5-point Likert-type scales. After completion, they were informed that their responses were used to 'match' them with a group consisting of people 'who are characterized by a similar *weltanschauung* to your own. Thus, you are matched with a common identity group.' Following this allocation procedure, participants were asked to recall what kind of group they had been assigned to.

After the allocation to groups, the discussions took place. Participants were briefly instructed about how the discussion software worked: they could chat with each other via IRC, a very fast synchronous communication program. They discussed two topics for 15 minutes each, and after each discussion they answered some questions

¹ A copy of the computer program can be requested from the first author.

² Please note that Prentice and colleagues (1994) talk about 'common bond' groups. However, we thought the interpersonal nature of these groups would be accentuated for participants by referring to these groups as personal bond groups.

about the discussion. After completing the final questionnaire, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study, and they received their course credit.

The first topic was related to social security. Participants were told that 'Increasingly, employees are hired on a temporary basis. However, employers argue that existing governmental restrictions still hinder the flexibility they need. Now, the government seems resigned that short-term contracts will be the norm for the immediate future, and proposals are drawn up to loosen labor laws. Critics argue that this trend undermines social security, and is ultimately detrimental to the quality of work and living. Please discuss this issue with your fellow group members.' For the discussion about the second topic, participants read a similar story about governmental plans to create an island in the sea in order to build a new airport, and environmentalists' arguments against this plan. Both topics were piloted among undergraduates. The pilot showed that they generally were opposed to temporary contracts and for maintaining social security, and that they were opposed to an airport in sea and for preserving the environment despite forfeiting potential economical gains. Moreover, they assumed that fellow-students would share their views on both issues.

Measures. Participants received a post-discussion questionnaire after each discussion. Answers consisted of responses on 9-point Likert-type scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*). Attitudes of participants were measured with scales consisting of two questions each. For the first topic, the statements were 'The shift towards a higher proportion of temporary contracts on the job market is a good one' (recoded) and 'Social security is more important than company's flexibility to hire people for short periods of time'. The second topic's statements were 'An airport in sea is a good idea' (recoded) and 'Environmental care is more important than economic growth'.

Participants answered a number of questions about their group and the discussion. First was a check of the deindividuation manipulation's effect on the anonymity. Interpersonal attraction within the group was measured with two questions. Four questions asked about the degree to which the group atmosphere was interpersonal and friendly. Finally, two questions asked for the ability of participants to form an impression of each other. After the second questionnaire, a final multiple-choice question was added as a check of the group type manipulation.

Results

Reliabilities of the scales were satisfactory. In addition, the checks during the instructions indicated that all participants understood them, and that all participants realized what group they were assigned to. The check of the group type manipulation indicated that after the study 79 participants believed their group was of the type they were assigned to. Seven participants indicated they were not certain how to describe their group, and only four participants reported that their group was of the opposite type.³

³ Because these four were in separate groups, and because they had earlier indicated to have understood the manipulation, their scores were not removed from the group averages.

The participants who were not convinced by the manipulation appeared to be randomly distributed across conditions. In sum, the manipulation of group type appears to have been successful. All further results were analyzed with 2 (deindividuation) X 2 (group type) analyses of variance conducted on the average group scores.

The check of the deindividuation manipulation indicated that it also was successful. In the deindividuated condition, groups indicated that they felt anonymous ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.12$) compared with the individuated condition ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.80$). With regard to individuation, a similar (but reversed) main effect of anonymity was highly reliable. In the individuated condition, groups ($n = 16$) indicated that they were better able to individuate group members ($M = 6.59$, $SD = 0.75$) compared with the deindividuated condition ($n = 14$, $M = 5.49$, $SD = 1.08$).

Two measures assessed the impact of the group type manipulation on the interaction within the group. The group type manipulation had the predicted impact on interpersonal attraction: Interpersonal attraction was higher in the common bond groups ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.86$) compared with the common identity groups ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.25$). Similarly, the group atmosphere was rated to be more congenial in common bond groups ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 0.56$) compared with common identity groups ($M = 5.34$, $SD = 0.58$). Main effects of the deindividuation manipulation and the interactions were not reliable.

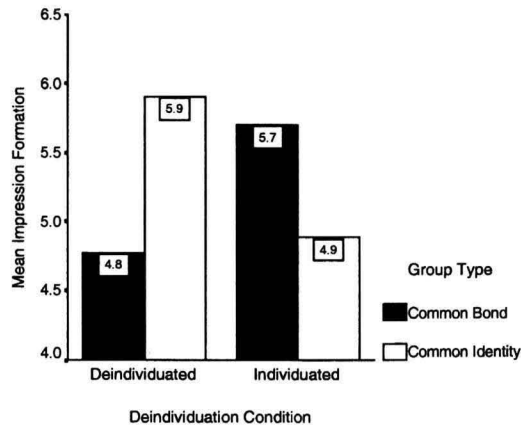


Figure 1: Mean reported ability of forming an impression of discussants as a function of deindividuation condition (deindividuation vs. individuation) and group type (common bond vs. common identity).

With regard to the measure of impression formation, an unexpected interaction was found. No main effects were reliable on this measure. However, the interaction between deindividuation and group type was highly reliable. Inspection of the means, displayed in Figure 1, shows that in the common bond condition there was a trend for deindividuated groups to report being less able to form an impression ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 0.44$) than individuated groups ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.04$). However, in the common identity condition the deindividuated groups were better able to form an impression ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 1.07$)

than individuated groups ($M = 4.89, SD = 0.85$). Thus, paradoxically, having individuating information hindered participants somewhat in forming an impression of each other in common identity groups, but it helped them in common bond groups.

Finally, the attitude scales showed the predicted interaction. Across both measures (analyzed in a repeated measures ANOVA) the main effects of deindividuation and group type were not reliable, nor were any of the within-subjects effects. The predicted interaction, however, was significant. Inspection of the univariate effects confirmed that the interaction was reliable for both the first attitude topic and for the second topic. As can be seen in Figure 2, these effects were as predicted. Examination of simple main effects across topics confirmed that the impact of deindividuation on polarization was opposite for group types: whereas deindividuation reduced the influence of the group norm in common bond groups, there was a trend for deindividuation to increase normative influence in common identity groups. Thus, a clear cross-over interaction was obtained in the predicted direction: Attitudes were most polarized in the common identity groups when its members were deindividuated. Conversely, in common bond groups the opposite effect was found: attitudes were more polarized when its members were individuated.

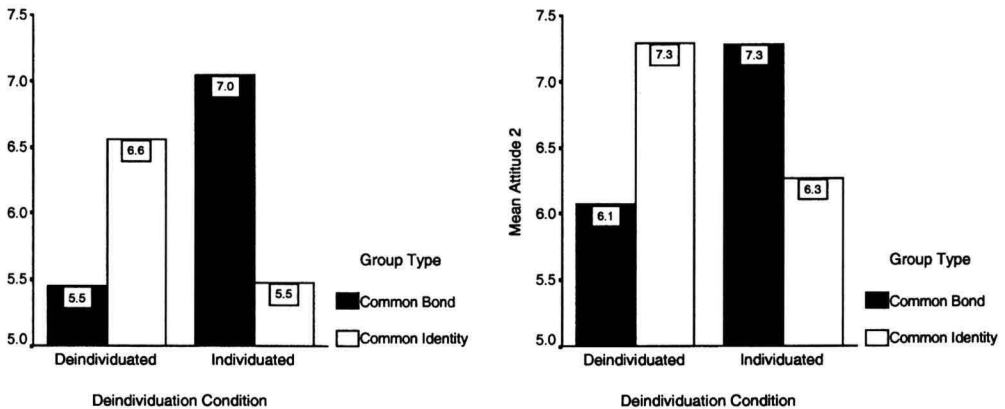


Figure 2: Mean reported attitudes after group discussion as a function of deindividuation condition (deindividuation vs. individuation) and group type (common bond vs. common identity).

A post-hoc exploration of the underlying process of this effect showed that the extent to which people thought they could form an adequate impression of each other after the first discussion predicted the degree to which attitudes were polarized after the second discussion. A mediational analysis showed that the interaction effect of deindividuation and group type on the second attitude topic ($\beta = .41$) was reduced to non-significance ($\beta = .22$) when the mediator impression formation was entered into the regression equation. Together with the finding that the interaction had a reliable impact on the mediator ($\beta = .42$), and the mediator in turn had a reliable impact on the attitude measure ($\beta = .45$) this pattern suggests that impression formation mediates the interaction effect of experimental conditions on the attitude measure (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Discussion

Results support the predictions. The two types of groups, common bond and common identity groups, respond differently to the conditions under which they could discuss the issues they were faced with. Common bond groups were most influential in shaping their members' views — as evidenced by attitude polarization on two issues — when group members were individuated and personally identifiable to each other. We believe this is consistent with the idea that close interpersonal contact is required for convincing and influencing others. This finding therefore supports the notion that interpersonal social influence is maximized under individuating circumstances. However, the opposite effect was obtained in groups of a different type: common identity groups. In these groups, which are defined and formed around a shared property which provides the nucleus for the group's social identity, social influence is *minimized* by individuation. This finding is highly consistent with previous findings showing that the influence of social identities and the associated social norms is greatest under conditions of deindividuation and depersonalization (Postmes & Spears, 1998; Postmes, Spears, Sakhel, & De Groot, 1998b; Spears et al., 1990).

The method used to manipulate group types may be called unconventional. Usually, experimental demand is deemed undesirable and something to avoid at all cost, yet our manipulation comes quite close to it: We literally told participants what the different types of group were, and to what type they were allocated. We required such a strong and direct manipulation because of the empirical problems in distinguishing between the two groups in prior research (Prentice et al., 1994). Indeed, our assumption that direct instructions about different types of groups and the allocation procedure would go to the heart of the defining properties of both types was confirmed by the manipulation check and the measures indicating that common bond groups had higher interpersonal attraction and a more congenial atmosphere. However, we believe that experimental demand is no obstacle in the interpretation of our results. Firstly, the participants were deindividuated within the group, but they were not deindividuated towards the experimenter. Thus, compliance with the experimental demand did not vary across deindividuation conditions because of anonymity towards the experimenter. Moreover, it is hard to see why such alternative explanations based on demand can account for the interaction pattern obtained. A main effect of group type would have been consistent with an experimental demand interpretation, but the cross-over interaction found most certainly is not: It is unlikely that participants could anticipate that the impact of deindividuation would interact with the type of group they were in. We therefore conclude that the unconventional methodology does not stand in the way of meaningful interpretation of these effects.

Our findings suggest a resolution to some issues in small group research, and may aid theoretical development in this domain. First and foremost, they point to the dual nature of the small group. A group can be nothing more than an aggregate of individuals held together by interpersonal affiliations between group members. Yet it does not appear to be the case that such a group is one in which individuals, to paraphrase Floyd Allport (1924), behave just as they would alone, only more so. Also in a common bond group there is evidence that suggests that the group is more than the

sum of its parts: the ability of common bond groups to polarize is a direct sign that the group is more than that. Conversely, the study bears evidence that also under conditions in which group members do not appear to be particularly strongly attracted to each other, and do not even appreciate interacting with each other, strong social influence may be found. In fact, this social influence is particularly strong when the cover of anonymity provided by the deindividuation manipulation provides every opportunity to abandon and ignore the group. Of course, we argue that the social influence exerted is of a fundamentally different nature, but that does not alter the fact that the outcome is identical: influence of the group over its members' views. Thus, we believe that we have provided evidence for the existence of two fundamentally different sources of social influence, which appear to be related to the 'types' of small groups as proposed by Prentice et al. (1994).

It is likely that no small group encountered in real life will be an entirely interpersonal common bond group or a radically impersonal common identity group. Most groups (and this is of course somewhat different for social categories and minimal groups) would have some defining property (or develop it over the course of group life) as well as some degree of interpersonal interaction between its members. Therefore, both forms of social influence distinguished in this paper, interpersonal and social identity, should be found to a varying degree in most groups.

If we accept the notion that these two types of social influence (interpersonal and social identity) exist on different planes, and therefore may be somewhat independent of each other, it would appear that some of the apparent inconsistencies which we find in groups are not as puzzling as they seem. For example, groups exist in which discord among members is a rule rather than an exception, yet these groups nevertheless function as a unity in achieving a common goal. This phenomenon might be explained by appreciating that discord in interpersonal matters need not stand in the way of unity at the level of a shared identity. The opposite may be even found more often: Groups are sometimes not able to reach an agreement about their goals or the best way to attain them despite the good interpersonal relations within the group. This situation may occur when interpersonally group members get on well with each other, but a common identity has not yet materialized. This analysis, then, suggests that groups often operate at two levels, and we believe that it is functional to distinguish between the social processes in small groups operating at both levels simultaneously and possibly in interaction with each other.

Furthermore, our results resolve one of the paradoxes of SIT and SCT: that the success of a unified theory of groups has been limited to particular forms of social grouping. On the one hand, our findings attest to the fruitfulness of taking social identity into account, also in small groups. However, they impose a limitation on the generality of these theories, in particular on the suggestion that social identity forms the basis of social influence in small groups. Our results indicate that social identity does play a role, but that it is only one of the players.

Results also provide support for SIDE. Results support the model's assertion that the impact of deindividuation to increase social influence is related to the social identity of the small group involved. They introduce, however, an important limitation to the generality of this model: as is the case for SIT/SCT, the SIDE model has to take into

account that its predictions are restricted to specific social contexts, possibly to 'types' of groups, and most certainly to a specific plane of social influence, namely to groups which have a common identity, and to the influence exerted by this identity. Acknowledging this we believe may help resolve some of the inconsistencies that have been noted in the emerging literature on the SIDE.

In conclusion, we propose that the empirical distinction between common bond and common identity groups is a useful one for examining social influence processes in small groups. Underlying the distinction between these two types, is the fact that group are characterized by different modes of social influence, based on interpersonal factors or on the common identity respectively. That these different types of groups and their associated modes of social influence may co-exist within groups helps resolve puzzling aspects of the small group literature for one theory or another, to reconcile certain theoretical opposites, but most importantly to enrich our understanding and thereby do justice to the complex character of small groups.

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