

THE PROS AND CONS OF INGROUP AMBIVALENCE: THE MODERATING ROLES OF ATTITUDINAL BASIS AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN INGROUP ATTACHMENT AND GLORIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Two studies examined modes of social identification ('attachment' to the group and ingroup 'glorification') that can lead people to experience positive or negative psychological consequences from their cognition-based or affect-based ambivalent evaluations of the ingroup. As expected, among highly attached participants but not high glorifiers, cognitive ambivalence had positive consequences, predicting a stronger perception of their ambivalent views about fellow group members as a personal contribution to the ingroup. By contrast, as also expected, among highly glorifying but not highly attached participants, cognitive ambivalence had negative consequence, eliciting a negative affective response. To sum up, the present data highlight the opposing valence of the psychological consequences of being ambivalent towards one's own group for high glorifiers and highly attached individuals. These findings point to the importance of taking both group members' individual differences in facets of social identification and the affective as well as cognitive components of their ingroup ambivalence into account when considering the effects of such ambivalent attitude because these factors can moderate these effects.

INTRODUCTION

When people hold simultaneously positive and negative attitudes towards their own group, ingroup 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).

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.

Ambivalence and Individual Differences in Modes of Social Identification: Ingroup Attachment and Glorification

The present work sought to clarify a basic puzzle in group-directed ambivalence literature: the seemingly paradoxical effects of ingroup identification and ambivalence on group-based affect.

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 ingroup is perceived as constructive criticism of the group's characteristics and past actions in order to change it 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 ingroup because individuals strive for a (unambivalently) positive self-image (Sedikides, 1993). Consistent with this rationale, prior research shows that expressing ambivalence in cognitions (beliefs), but not affect (emotions), about one's own group influences *negatively* high identifiers' emotional response (e.g., Costarelli, 2011; Costarelli & Sanitioso, 2012).

I reasoned that this prior theoretical and empirical work has adopted one-dimensional construals of social identification, assessing identification with the ingroup operationalized as the cognitive and affective components of Tajfel's (1978) definition of social identity. I propose that the inconsistencies in prior work regarding the effects of social identification and ambivalence on group-based affect reflect the complex effects of ingroup identification, which cannot be detected with a uni-dimensional approach. In the present article, I argue that these empirical inconsistencies may be reconciled by using the two-mode conceptualization of ingroup identification recently 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 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.

I argue that these two different facets of identification have *opposing* relations to a range of group-relevant reactions to ambivalence towards the ingroup. This should be the case because of the different stance towards ingroup criticism of those members that are highly attached to the group compared to those that strongly glorify it (Staub, 1997). Ingroup attachment allows for constructive criticism of the ingroup's characteristics and past actions in order to change it for better (Schatz et al., 1999). By contrast, ingroup glorification leads to beliefs in impeccability of

the group and is thus characterized by its unquestioning positive evaluation as well as the related intolerance of group-directed criticism (Schatz & Staub, 1997).

Hypotheses

How do people with differing prior levels of ingroup attachment and glorification react to ambivalent feelings and thoughts about their group? I reasoned that individuals who view the ingroup's status as superior to that of other groups 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 ingroup. This should not be the case for those individuals who consider their membership in the group important to the self (i.e. highly attached individuals) but who are in principle willing to accept that there is both 'good and bad' within their group. Rather, these individuals should be willing to embrace the negative in order to improve their own group (*constructive patriotism*: Schatz et al., 1999).

On the basis of the theoretical work reviewed above, I expect ingroup glorification but not attachment to moderate the negative affective impact of ingroup ambivalence for identity concerns. This should be the case because attachment allows for constructive criticisms of the ingroup. As a consequence, highly attached group members cannot be expected to be as threatened by their ambivalent views about the ingroup as high glorifiers are. Further, prior research has found highly identified members to view ingroup-directed criticism in a positive way (for a review, see Packer, 2008). Given that, I reasoned that cognitive ambivalence towards the ingroup can be expected to be related with highly attached members' perceptions of ambivalence in this domain as a contribution to the identification of some critical aspects of the group's characteristics and past actions in order to change it for better. This should be the case because ingroup attachment allows for constructive criticisms of the group. By contrast, ambivalence in group-based emotions cannot be expected to be perceived as contributing the group by highlighting its pitfalls and shortcomings. This should be the case because prior research has found uncertainty arising from inconsistent emotions and feelings towards attitude objects to impede decision-making, whereby disrupting one's ability to act effectively (e.g., Newby-Clark, McGregor, & Zanna, 2002).

Finally, precisely because ingroup attachment allows for constructive criticisms of the group, highly attached group members cannot be expected to be as threatened by expressing ambivalent views about the ingroup as high glorifiers are. Consistent with this rationale, the positive view about cognitively-based ingroup ambivalence among highly attached group members (as per H2) cannot be expected to be found among high glorifiers.

Following this line of reasoning, I tested the following specific hypothesis in a correlational (Study 1) and an experimental study (Study 2).

H1: Among higher but not weaker ingroup glorifying participants cognitively-based ingroup ambivalence towards the ingroup will be positively related to subsequent discomfort.

H2: Among highly attached but not weakly attached participants, cognitively-based ingroup ambivalence will be perceived more as a contribution to the group, compared to negative cognitively-based univalent attitudes towards the group, and;

H3: such effects will not be found as a consequence of highly attached members' affect-based ambivalence towards the ingroup.

H4: Higher but not weaker ingroup glorifying participants will experience more discomfort after expressing their cognitively-based ambivalent attitude rather than their univalent negative attitude towards the ingroup.

Finding support for this pattern of findings by statistically controlling for each identification mode when examining the interaction effects of the other identification mode with ingroup ambivalence would enable to conceptually replicate prior research that used a uni-dimensional conceptualization of ingroup identification without disentangling attachment and glorification effects (e.g., Costarelli, 2011; Costarelli & Sanitioso, 2012).

STUDY 1

METHOD

Participants and Design

Eighty-three psychology students (53 women; age $M = 19.05$) volunteered to take part in the study.

Procedure and Measures

The experimenter provided participants an introduction page and a questionnaire. The introduction page presented the study as part of a larger research project allegedly investigating European students' attitudes towards various social objects. In the questionnaire, psychology students (i.e. participants' academic fellow group members) was the target ingroup. To render ingroup membership salient, participants were asked to write down, in the first page of the questionnaire, their major followed by their responses to the 'attachment' (e.g., "Being a psychology student is an important part of my identity") and 'glorification' (e.g., "Psychology students are better than other university students in all respects") scales developed by Roccas et al. (2006), adapted for the current target ingroup. The responses were given on a continuum ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The attachment (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$; $M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.65$) and glorification ($\alpha = .83$; $M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.74$) scales proved to be reliable and were thus averaged into two separate composite scores.

On the following page, participants were presented with measures of 'experienced' cognition- and affect-based ambivalence towards the ingroup. They responded to two blocks of questions whose order was randomly counterbalanced across participants. Each block contained either the cognition- or the affect-based measures of 'experienced' ambivalence developed by Priester and Petty (1996). One block consisted of three items measuring cognitively-based ambivalence towards the ingroup (*Thinking about psychology students, to what extent are your opinions / ideas / beliefs about them conflicted?*). The other block consisted of three items measuring affectively-based ambivalence towards the ingroup (*Thinking about psychology students, to what extent are your feelings / emotions / sensations about them conflicted?*). Participants responded using a 7 point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). As noted by Priester and

Petty (1996), these two measures are particularly appropriate to assess cognition- and affect-based experience of ambivalence because of their correspondence to the commonly accepted tripartite model of attitudes (Ostrom, 1969). The cognition-based ambivalence ($\alpha = .86$, $M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.71$) and affect-based ambivalence ($\alpha = .80$; $M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.54$) towards the ingroup indices proved to be reliable and were thus averaged into two separate composite scores.

On the following page of the questionnaire, participants were administered the discomfort measure developed by Elliot and Devine (1994) to assess attitudinal inconsistency-related discomfort (*uneasy*; *bothered*; *uncomfortable*) that constituted the dependent measure. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the emotional adjectives corresponded to how they were feeling at that time. Participants' responses showed good internal consistency and were thus averaged into a composite score ($\alpha = .85$, $M = 5.26$, $SD = 0.58$). Finally, participants were asked to indicate their age and gender. Before leaving, participants were fully debriefed and thanked.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were no scale order counterbalancing effects, and these will not be discussed further. Preliminary correlation analyses ascertained that the two ambivalence indices were moderately related ($r = .42$, $p < .05$), but none of them correlated with initial ingroup attachment or glorification (r s between -0.15 and -0.23 , ns), thus allowing us to use them as independent variables in a general linear model (GLM) procedure. To this end, initial ingroup glorification and attachment as well as cognition-based and affect-based ingroup 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, I treated the scores for discomfort as a dependent variable. Consistent with the notion that glorification of the group and attachment to it partially overlap, these two measures were positively related (ingroup attachment and glorification: $r = .54$, $p < .01$). Therefore, following the procedure used in prior research on ingroup attachment and glorification (e.g., Roccas et al., 2006), I controlled for each of the two identification mode when examining the interaction effects of the other identification mode with ingroup ambivalence.

Discomfort

Using the GLM described earlier, no significant main effects emerged, F s(1, 82) < 2.64, p s > .10. Most importantly, in line with predictions, both the affect-based ambivalence X attachment interaction and the affect-based X glorification interaction were not significant, F s(1, 82) < 0.64, p > .42. As also expected, while the cognition-based ambivalence X attachment interaction was not significant, $F(1, 82) = 1.10$, $p > .29$, the cognition-based ambivalence X glorification interaction was statistically significant, $F(1, 82) = 7.30$, $p < .009$. Cognition-based ingroup ambivalence did not affect negative affect among low glorifiers (1 SD below the mean), $B = .25$, $t = 0.56$, $p = .58$, but it positively influenced negative affect among high glorifiers (1 SD above the mean), $B = .66$, $t = 2.43$, $p < .03$. The related correlation coefficients in these two subsamples were statistically different from each other, $Z = -2.12$, $p = .01$, one-tailed. All higher-order interactions between the independent variables were not statistically significant, F s(1, 82) < 1.59,

$p > .21$.

Study 1 supported the present hypothesis. At higher levels of ingroup glorification, discomfort was greater to the extent that cognitive ambivalence towards the group increased. However, this statistical association was weaker at lower levels of glorification.

Yet three issues remained. First, given the correlational nature of the design, it is not possible to make any inferences concerning the causal relationships between ingroup ambivalence and discomfort. Besides, no indications emerge from these findings as regards other theoretically important factors that may be related to this pattern. Finally, the nature of the relationships observed may be specific to university students and their academic groups, and may thus not be generalizable to other kinds of social groups.

STUDY 2

The current study aimed to address the issues that emerged from the findings of the preceding one. Specifically, first, Study 2 used national group as an attitude object rather than academic group as in the preceding one.

Additionally, rather than measuring cognition-based ambivalence as in Study 1, I experimentally manipulated the structure of cognition-based ingroup attitude. Conceivably, experiencing ambivalence depends on whether one is sufficiently aware of one's own within-evaluation conflict (Priester & Petty, 1996, 2001). Accordingly, more conclusive support for the proposed arguments would be obtained if, replicating the findings of Study 1, higher but not weaker ingroup glorifiers experience more discomfort after expressing their cognitively-based ambivalent attitude rather than their univalent negative attitude towards the ingroup.

Additionally, since ingroup attachment allows for constructive criticisms of the ingroup (Roccas et al., 2006), I predicted that highly attached group members would perceive to have contributed to the identification of some critical aspects of the group by the expression of their ambivalent beliefs about it. Specifically, I expected that among highly attached but not weakly attached participants, cognitively-based ingroup ambivalence would be perceived more as a contribution to the group, compared to negative cognitively-based univalent attitudes towards the group. By contrast, I anticipated that such effects would not be found after highly attached members' expression of affect-based ambivalence towards the group. Additionally, because attachment allows for constructive criticisms of the ingroup, I reasoned that highly attached group members are not as threatened by expressing ambivalent views on the ingroup as high glorifiers are. Consistent with this rationale, such post-ambivalence effects cannot be expected among high glorifiers of the ingroup. By contrast, more conclusive support for the proposed arguments would be obtained if, replicating the findings of Study 1, higher but not weaker ingroup glorifiers are found to experience more discomfort after expressing their cognitively-based ambivalent attitude rather than their univalent negative attitude towards the ingroup.

METHOD

Participants and Design

Eighty-one senior high-school students (48 women; age: $M = 19.04$, range: 18-19) volunteered to take part in the study. They were randomly assigned to two conditions (see below). Participant gender was similarly distributed across conditions. In this study, the ingroup was defined as people from the same country as the participants (i.e. Italians).

Procedure and Measures

Before the start of a regular lecture, an experimenter invited students to participate in the study. Participants were provided an introduction sheet and a questionnaire that closely paralleled those used in Study 1 as adapted for the current ingroup target (i.e. Italians). The first important modification from the procedure used in Study 1 concerned the manipulation introduced after assessing participants' ingroup attachment ($\alpha = .78$; $M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.69$) and glorification ($\alpha = .85$; $M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.78$) by means of the same items employed in Study 1.

To this end, following Costarelli and Sanitioso (2012), all participants were asked to evaluate fellow group members. For half the participants (cognitive ambivalence condition), an instruction of focusing on "both positive AND negative characteristics of" fellow group members was included after the measurement of ingroup attachment and glorification. Next, participants in this condition answered the same questions that were used in Study 1 to tap cognitively-based ingroup ambivalence, as adapted for the current ingroup. Participants responded using a 7 point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

For the other half (cognitive univalent negative condition), after the measurement of ingroup attachment and glorification, participants were asked to focus on negative characteristics of the ingroup). To this end, participants responded to one block of questions containing three items measuring cognitively-based univalent negative attitudes towards the ingroup ('Thinking about Italians as a whole, to what extent do your opinions and ideas have to do with their *faults / limits / negative characteristics*?'). Participants responded using a 7 point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Next, all participants answered the same discomfort scale developed by Elliot and Devine (1994) that was used in Study 1. Participants responded using a 7 point rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). The scale items showed good internal consistency and were thus averaged into a composite score ($\alpha = .85$, $M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.75$).

Finally, the additional important modification from the procedure used in Study 1 concerned the assessment of participants' perceptions concerning the contribution to the ingroup of holding ambivalent beliefs concerning one's own group. To this end, one two-item scale was used ('Viewing one's own group in a *mixed / ambivalent* way can contribute to its betterment'). 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 ingroup of one's own cognitively-based ingroup ambivalence ($\alpha = .78$; $M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.66$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preliminary correlation analyses ascertained that neither the ambivalence nor the negative attitude index correlated with ingroup attachment and glorification (r s between -0.14 and -0.21 , ns). Finally, ingroup attachment and glorification did not vary across experimental conditions, F s < 3.73 , ns .

As in the previous study, in two separate univariate General linear models, I considered discomfort and perceived contribution to the group of cognitively-based ingroup ambivalence as the dependent variables (discomfort was not significantly related to the contribution-of-ambivalence measure, partial $r = 0.11$, $p > .67$, after controlling for cognitive ingroup attitude structure, attachment, and glorification relationships). In the GLMs, I treated the manipulation (structure of cognitive ingroup attitude: negative univalent = -1 vs. ambivalent = 1) and the continuous scores of ingroup glorification and attachment as the independent variables. As in the previous study, mean-centered predictor scores were employed (Aiken and West, 1991). Consistent with the notion that glorification of the group and attachment to it partially overlap, these two measures were positively related (ingroup attachment and glorification: $r = .52$, $p < .01$). Therefore, as in Study 1, following the procedure used in prior research on ingroup attachment and glorification (e.g., Roccas et al., 2006), I controlled for each of the two identification mode when examining the interaction effects of the other identification mode with ingroup ambivalence.

Discomfort

Using the GLM described earlier, no significant main effects emerged, F s(1, 80) < 3.3 , $ps > .08$. Most importantly, in line with predictions, while the attitude structure X attachment interaction was not significant, $F(1, 80) = 0.73$, $p = .39$, the attitude structure X glorification interaction was significant, $F(1, 80) = 5.12$, $p = .026$. Analyzing the glorification simple-slopes revealed that discomfort following the expression of ambivalence that was based on beliefs regarding the outgroup became stronger as ingroup glorification increased ($B = 0.57$, $SE = 0.27$, $t = 2.05$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .23$), whereas glorification was not influential on discomfort following the expression of univalent negative attitude that was based on beliefs ($B = -0.00$, $SE = 0.14$, $t = -0.06$, ns).

Whereas low glorifiers (1 SD below the mean) did not significantly differ in discomfort depending on condition, $t = 1.35$, $p < .19$ (M s = 1.89 and 1.21 , in the ambivalent and negative univalent conditions, respectively), high glorifiers (1 SD above the mean) experienced significantly more discomfort after expressing cognitively-based ingroup ambivalence ($M = 3.78$) than after expressing negative cognitively-based univalent attitudes towards the group ($M = 1.28$), $t = 9.74$, $p < .002$. All higher-order interactions were not significant, F s < 1 , $ps > .05$.

Perceived contribution to the group of cognitively-based ingroup attitude

On this score, using the GLM described earlier, no significant main effects emerged, F s(1, 60) $<$

1.34, $p > .26$. In line with predictions, the attitude structure X glorification interaction was not significant, $F_s(1, 60) = 0.77$, $p = .36$, while the attitude structure X attachment interaction was statistically significant, $F_s(1, 60) = 5.15$, $p > .05$.

Weakly attached participants (1 *SD* below the mean) did not differ in their perceptions of cognitive ingroup attitude as a contribution to the group depending on condition, $t = 1.54$, $p > .17$ ($M_s = 3.50$ and 4.93 , in the ambivalence and negative univalence conditions, respectively). By contrast, highly attached participants (1 *SD* above the mean) perceived their ingroup attitude to be significantly more contributing to the group when ambivalent attitudes were expressed ($M = 6.00$) than after expressing univalent negative attitudes ($M = 3.52$), $t = 2.43$, $p < .05$. All higher-order interactions were not significant, $F_s < 1$, $p_s > .05$.

Study 2 supported our hypotheses, while addressing the shortcomings of the preceding study by using an experimental design (rather than a correlational one as in the first study), and nationals as a target ingroup (rather than academic major as in Study 1). Conceptually replicating the findings from Study 1, stronger but not weaker ingroup glorification participants experienced more negative affect when cognitively-based ambivalence was expressed than after expressing negative cognitively-based univalent attitudes towards the group. Additionally, highly but not weakly group attached participants perceived their cognitively-based ingroup attitude ambivalence to be significantly more contributing to the group after expressing their ingroup ambivalence than after expressing negative cognitively-based univalent attitude towards the group.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Taken together, the present data highlight the opposing valence of the psychological consequences of being ambivalent towards one's own group for high glorifiers and highly attached individuals. In a nutshell, those ingroup ambivalence effects that were moderated by ingroup glorification had negative psychological consequences (eliciting a negative affective response). Specifically, on the one hand, the current findings showed that people who are strongly attached to their group do not feel negatively when their beliefs about the group are not uniquely positive but also negative. This finding is consistent with prior theoretical work (e.g., Roccas et al., 2006; Schatz et al., 1999; Staub, 1997).

On the other hand, an important finding in this pattern is that ingroup attachment was positively related to viewing one's ambivalent beliefs about the ingroup 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. This is consistent with prior theoretical work arguing that, for those who are strongly identified with a group, expressing criticism directed to such a group is perceived as a way to help it overcome its shortcomings and defaults *vis-à-vis* relevant outgroups in the intergroup context (for a review, see Packer, 2008).

As opposed to those for highly attached individuals, the current data show the negative psychological consequences for high glorifiers of acknowledging pitfalls and defaults in their

group via the expression of their cognitive ambivalence towards the ingroup. This is in line with prior theoretical work arguing that ingroup glorification leads to beliefs in impeccability of the group and is thus characterized by its unquestioning positive evaluation and the related intolerance of group-directed criticism (e.g., Roccas et al., 2006; Schatz & Staub, 1997; Staub, 1997).

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APPENDIX A

TABLE 1.

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among the Variables in Study 1

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Ingroup attachment	-			
2. Ingroup glorification		-		
3. Cognitive ambivalence	-0.15	-0.23	-	
4. Affective ambivalence	-0.21	-0.18	0.42*	-
M	4.27	4.18	4.63	3.95
SD	0.65	0.74	0.71	0.54

NOTE: N = 83

* = $p < 0.05$

TABLE 2.

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among the Variables in Study 2

Variable	1	2	3
1. Cognitive attitude structure manipulation (negative univalent = -1 vs. ambivalent = 1)	-		
2. Ingroup attachment	-0.18	-	
3. Ingroup glorification		-0.51*	-
M	4.41	4.26	4.37
SD	0.69	0.78	0.89

NOTE: N = 81

* = $p < 0.05$

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