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Self-categorisation, commitment to the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to show that, when examining social identification, it is both possible and important to distinguish between self-categorisation, commitment to the group, and group self-esteem, as related but separate aspects of group members' social identity. This was demonstrated in an experiment ($N = 119$*), in which Ingroup Status (high/low), Ingroup Size (majority/minority), and Group Formation (self-selected/assigned group membership) were manipulated orthogonally. The results of this study confirm that these three aspects of social identity can be distinguished as separate factors in a principal components analysis. Furthermore, as predicted, the three aspects are differentially related to manipulated group features, as well as displays of ingroup favouritism. Group members' self-categorisations were only affected by the relative* size *of the group, while group self-esteem was only influenced by group* status. *Affective commitment to the group depended both on group status and on the group assignment criterion. Importantly, only the group commitment aspect of social identity mediated displays of ingroup favouritism. Copyright © 1999 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Although social identification plays a key role in social identity theory, relatively little attention has been devoted to the question of how exactly this concept should be defined theoretically, or how it can be measured empirically. Consequently, investigations of social identity-related processes have often not systematically included social identification as a dependent measure, have only measured it indirectly, or merely inferred social identification from other responses such as intergroup differentiation. The main goal of this investigation is to take a closer look at the conceptualisation and measurement of social identification, by trying to distinguish between different aspects of social identification, relating these to specific group features, and investigating them as mediators of social behaviour.

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At a theoretical level, the definition proposed by Tajfel (1978), which is most commonly cited, maintains that social identity is '... that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.' (p. 63). On the basis of this definition, it is assumed that three components may contribute to one's social identity: a *cognitive* component (a cognitive awareness of one's membership in a social group—self-categorisation), an *evaluative* component (a positive or negative value connotation attached to this group membership—group self-esteem), and an *emotional* component (a sense of emotional involvement with the group—affective commitment). The measurement scales that were developed to tap identification with social group reflect this common conception, as they all seem to incorporate the three components proposed in Tajfel's definition (see Ellemers & Mlicki, unpublished manuscript, for an overview). However, social identification is usually treated as a unidimensional construct (cf. Ellemers, 1991). A notable exception is a study by Hinkle, Taylor, Fox-Cardamone and Crook (1989), who distinguish three factors in the group identification scale developed by Brown, Condor, Mathew, Wade and Williams (1986). Although Hinkle *et al.* (1989) argue in favour of a multi-component conceptualisation of group identification, the components they distinguish show substantial intercorrelations (between 0.43 and 0.58), which seems to have been taken as an indication that a common treatment as one factor would be acceptable for practical purposes. More importantly, this imprecision at the operational level is often reflected in conceptual treatments of social identity, and has resulted in a considerable amount of theoretical confusion.

Empirical investigations of social identity have often studied how people respond to artificially constructed or so-called minimal groups in experimental research paradigms (see Brewer, 1979). Although it was demonstrated with this method that mere categorisation can be sufficient to induce people to behave in terms of their group membership (cf. Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), this is not necessarily the case for members of natural groups. Indeed, it may be argued that in the minimal group paradigm, the categorisation into different groups provides the only way for people to make sense of the experimental situation. Hence, group affiliation is the only social cue that may be used to guide one's behaviour towards other participants (see also Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996). However, in more natural social contexts, people who acknowledge that they belong to a particular social category do not necessarily feel committed to that group, or behave in terms of that group membership. Instead, they might prefer to belong to another group, or simply be indifferent to this particular categorisation. Accordingly, it has been pointed out that seemingly robust experimental phenomena such as the display of ingroup favouritism were not consistently found as a consequence of mere categorisation into natural groups (cf. Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992).

The key proposal of social identity theory, however, is that it is the extent to which people *identify* with a particular social group that determines their inclination to behave in terms of their group membership. In this sense, social identification is primarily used to refer to a feeling of affective commitment to the group (i.e. the emotional component), rather than the possibility to distinguish between members of different social categories (the cognitive component). Therefore, as a first step we think it is important to distinguish cognitive awareness of one's group membership *per se* (*self-categorisation*) from the extent to which one feels emotionally involved

with the group in question (*affective commitment*).[1] Indeed, there is recent empirical evidence that people who belong to the same social group may show differential responses, depending on the extent to which they feel affectively committed to that group (cf. Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997). Accordingly, it has also been demonstrated that self-stereotyping (denoting a cognitive awareness of one's group membership) can be distinguished from affective commitment to the group (see Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997) at the measurement level, in the sense that they emerged as two separate clusters of items in a principal components analysis.

A second respect in which we would like to specify our conceptualisation of ingroup identification is by distinguishing the extent to which people feel emotionally involved with their group (*affective commitment*) from the value connotation of that particular group membership (*group self-esteem*). It has repeatedly been argued (cf. Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and demonstrated (cf, Ellemers, 1993) that the two often covary, in the sense that affective commitment tends to be stronger in more positively evaluated groups (because these groups may contribute more to a positive social identity), while people are inclined to distance themselves from less attractive groups. However, and again this can be seen most clearly in the case of natural groups (when leaving the group does not constitute an easy or attractive option), this does not imply that the two necessarily go together, or that these concepts can be used interchangeably. Indeed, recent empirical evidence clearly reveals that, provided their identity as members of a distinct social group is sufficiently important, people may show signs of strong emotional involvement while simultaneously acknowledging or even emphasizing the *negative* characteristics of their group (see Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996).

In terms of our conceptual analysis, this implies that *self-categorisation* (the cognitive component) as well as *affective commitment* to a specific group (the emotional component) can be distinguished from group self-esteem derived from the value connotation of that particular group membership (the evaluative component). More importantly, we want to argue that this distinction *should* be made, to be able to understand how they are affected differentially by specific characteristics of the group or the social context. Indeed, on the basis of previous theory and research it is possible to hypothesize which group characteristics are most likely to affect the three different components of identification. Furthermore, we predict that these components are differentially related to displays of ingroup favouritism in evaluative responses or outcome allocations.

Relative status can be considered a central group characteristic in both theory and research on social identity and intergroup relations. The general argument is that a low group status position results in unfavourable comparisons between the ingroup and relevant other groups, which may frustrate attempts to derive a positive social identity from one's group membership. As a result, members of lower status groups are expected to show less social identification than members of groups with higher status. Indeed, empirical investigations have confirmed that ingroup identification is generally less in lower status groups than in groups with high status (Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, De Vries, & Wilke, 1988; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, & Wilke,

[1]We have opted for the term 'affective' commitment because we aim to refer to a sense of emotional involvement in the group, rather than the commitment that stems from interdependence or normative considerations (see Allen & Meyer, 1990).

1990; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1987). However, in line with our previous analysis, we want to argue that it is mainly the *evaluative* component of social identity (group self-esteem), that is affected by relative group status. If this were indeed the case, this would also help us understand inconsistent empirical findings with respect to the so-called self-esteem hypothesis in social identity theory (see Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Long & Spears, 1997). Essentially, the contradictory issue seems to be that, on the one hand, members of lower-status groups are expected to show ingroup favouritism as a means to boost their social identity. On the other hand, to the extent that the current low status of their group results in low ingroup identification, this should preclude them from undertaking such group-level behaviour. However, if we assume that low group status negatively affects the evaluative component of identification only, while the level of affective commitment (the emotional component) can remain unchanged, it becomes clear that it is the combination of a threat to group self-esteem and strong affective commitment which should elicit attempts to depict the ingroup in a positive way.

A second important issue which has generated a substantial amount of empirical research concerns the effects of relative group size on ingroup identification and ingroup favouritism (e.g. Gerard & Hoyt, 1974; Mummendey & Simon, 1989; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1984; Simon & Brown, 1987). Again, to date, the precise nature of these effects has not been established unambiguously. We have argued elsewhere that (seemingly) inconsistent results may have been obtained in previous research because minority versus majority group membership has often been used to refer to differential status as well as differential group size (see Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997). However, when the two are disentangled, it turns out that minority group size results in stronger ingroup identification than majority group size. Other than group status effects, it seems that this is not due to the fact that membership in a minority group is more *attractive* but because it is more *salient* or *distinctive* than majority group membership (see McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978; McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1976). Simon and Hamilton (1994) indicate that membership in a small or distinctive group implies a relatively large overlap between the collective self and the individual self. In a similar vein, from an optimal distinctiveness perspective (see Brewer, 1991) it would seem that, compared to inclusion in a majority group, minority group membership offers a better opportunity to balance the need to retain some sense of individuality with the need to belong to a group, which should result in a greater readiness to perceive or define oneself as a group member. Accordingly, we would argue that it is mainly the cognitive component or *self-categorisation* aspect of ingroup identification that is affected by relative ingroup size.

Finally, we aim to identify group characteristics which primarily influence the emotional component of ingroup identification, that is, the extent to which people feel affectively *committed* to a particular group. In our view, this component is essential as this is supposed to constitute the main determinant of individual-level (such as distancing oneself from the group) versus group-level responses (e.g. displays of ingroup favouritism) to a common identity threat (see also Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997). In relation to this issue, we argue that a fundamental distinction can be made between *assigned* versus *achieved* (or self-selected) group memberships. Although this distinction has been noted in the literature (e.g. Luhtanen & Crocker, 1991), neither in theoretical accounts nor in empirical work has systematic attention been devoted to possible differential responses to membership in these two kinds of

groups. Nevertheless, from the original formulations of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as well as from previous empirical work we may infer that the nature of one's group membership is likely to make a difference.

In laboratory research (Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993) it has been established that individuals who feel that their inclusion in a lower-status group is unjust (but are nevertheless assigned to this group by the experimenter) are likely to compete with their fellow ingroup members in order to leave this group, indicating relatively little group commitment. In contrast, to the extent that people have voluntarily committed themselves to membership in a particular group, they are more inclined to show group solidarity, even when the group turns out to be unsuccessful (see Turner, Hogg, Turner, & Smith, 1984). In a similar vein, Cioffi and Garner (1996) have demonstrated that people who have actively applied for membership in a particular group are most likely to behave in accordance with their group membership. Indeed, the observation that systematically different results are obtained with research among natural versus artificial groups (see Mullen *et al*., 1992), may have to be attributed to the fact that artificial groups are usually created by *assigning* people to a particular experimental group, while a classification of research participants into natural groups (e.g. according to their study major, university town, or political affiliation) is generally more likely to involve *self-selected* group memberships. Accordingly, recent empirical evidence has demonstrated that different results obtained with these two kinds of research paradigms can at least to some extent be ascribed to the fact that the level of ingroup identification tends to be higher as a result of natural compared to artificially created group memberships (Jetten *et al*., 1996).

We want to argue that this differential group commitment essentially occurs because of the basis on which people are included in a particular group (i.e. assigned versus self-selected group memberships). Although in practice this distinction may covary with the distinction between artificial and natural groups as we have argued above, in our view this points to an empirical confound, rather than to a conceptually necessary or inherent combination of features of these two kinds of groups. Indeed, membership in some natural groups (such as gender groups or ethnic groups) is assigned, rather than self-selected, while artificial groups for laboratory investigations can also be created by letting participants choose or earn membership in a particular group (cf. Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). In this study we will therefore systematically vary the way in which participants are included in one of two artificially created groups by either having the experimenter decide (assigned group membership) or letting people indicate themselves to which of two groups they think they belong (self-selected group membership).

To summarise the above argument, it seems both necessary and informative to distinguish between different components of social identity as possible responses to group membership and group features. The first aim of this study therefore is to demonstrate that this is not only a possible conceptual distinction but that it can also be made empirically. For this purpose, we will investigate how the three aspects of social identity are differentially affected by important group features, notably the relative status and size of the group, and the basis of group formation (i.e. assigned or self-selected group membership). Furthermore, we aim to assess whether the three components of social identity play a different role as mediators of group-level behaviour. Specifically, we predict that it is essentially a sense of emotional *involvement* with the group (affective commitment), rather than the cognitive

(self-categorisation) or evaluative (group self-esteem) component of ingroup identification which predisposes people to show ingroup favouritism. In order to investigate this, we manipulated the group assignment criterion (self-selected versus assigned group membership), the relative size (minority versus majority) and status (high versus low) of artificially created groups. In addition to measuring the three components of social identity, we also included separate measures of personal self-esteem and personal identity (a personal-level equivalent of commitment to the group seems irrelevant), to investigate under what circumstances these measures at the personal level show opposite or parallel results to the group-level measures (Turner, 1985).

METHOD

Participants

One hundred and nineteen students of the Free University in Amsterdam (51 men and 68 women) participated on a voluntary basis in this study. Their mean age was 22 (ranging from 18 to 59). In each session of the experiment, eight students participated. They were randomly allocated to one of the experimental conditions, with equal proportions of male and female participants in each cell of the experimental design. Each session of the experiment lasted about one hour. At the end of each session, participants were fully debriefed and asked not to discuss the experiment with fellow students. They were thanked for their participation, and received book tokens for the amount of Hfl.10,-per person.

Procedure

Cover Story

Upon arrival, participants were placed in separate cubicles, and equipped with personal computers, which were allegedly connected with each other. Instructions about the experiment, and questions were displayed on the computer screen; participants could respond by using the keyboard and mouse. First, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire, in order to get acquainted with the computer equipment (e.g. 'I usually see more than one possible solution for problems I am faced with; I sometimes have difficulty seeing things from a broad perspective'). As a cover story, it was subsequently explained that the experiment would investigate people with different styles of problem solving, and more specifically, that inductive thinkers would be compared to deductive thinkers (see Doosje, Spears, & Koomen, 1995). It was further explained that, at the individual level, both styles of problem solving seemed equally effective. The alleged purpose of the present investigation would be to find out whether *groups* of inductive or deductive thinkers would differ with respect to their proficiency in problem solving. Therefore, it was necessary to subdivide the participants into two groups, according to their individual problem-solving style.

Manipulation of Group Formation

In the *assigned group* condition, it was stated that the questionnaire participants had completed at the outset of the experiment actually had measured their problem-solving style. After providing participants with some further information about the two styles of problem solving, they were allegedly subdivided into two groups, on the basis of their problem-solving style. The label of the group in which participants were placed (inductive or deductive) was counterbalanced. In the *self-selected group* condition, participants also received further information about the two styles of problem solving. However, in this condition, subjects could indicate for themselves which style best described their own way of thinking. Accordingly, their membership in the group of inductive thinkers or deductive thinkers was self-selected.[2]

Manipulation of Ingroup Size

Half of the participants were led to believe that their group was a majority group, half supposedly ended up in a minority group. In the *majority* condition, the ingroup allegedly consisted of five (of eight present) participants. Additionally it was stated that the ingroup problem-solving style was generally found in 70% of the population. In the *minority* condition, the ingroup was said to consist of three participants; in this condition the ingroup problem-solving style was allegedly shared by 30 per cent of the population.

Manipulation of Ingroup Status

After the two groups had been formed, participants were asked to complete a group task consisting of 15 items, in order to find out which of the two groups was more proficient at problem solving. For each item of this group task, participants were presented with a series of four items (e.g. vacuum cleaner, mop, broom, dustpan), and asked to indicate which item did not belong in the set. Then, participants were allegedly shown the initial answers given by other members of their group (in fact, these answers and the level of disagreement within the group were pre-programmed and standardised for all participants). On the basis of this information, participants could give their final answer; they were not informed about the final answers of their fellow group members. After they had completed all 15 items in this way, participants received (pre-programmed) feedback about the performance of the two groups. In the *high-status* condition, the ingroup received a score of 82 points; the other group

[2]It turned out that the description of the deductive style of thinking was considered more attractive. Accordingly, the majority (82 per cent) of participants in the self-selected group condition opted for the deductive group. A possible consequence of this apparent difference in attractiveness of the two groups would be that, in the *assigned group* condition, participants would find it 'worse' to be assigned to the inductive group than to the deductive group. However, additional analyses did not reveal that participants who were assigned to the inductive group responded differently from participants assigned to the deductive group. Specifically, there was no significant effect of group label on either of the three components of social identity (multivariate $F(3,101) = 1.02$, ns, all univariate effects ns), or on personal identity/personal self-esteem (multivariate $F(2,102) = 1.81$, ns, both univariate effects ns). Therefore, we decided to maintain assigned versus self-selected group membership (collapsed across group label) as a factor in the experimental design.

received 53 points. Additionally, participants were informed that the norm for university students was 67 points. In the *low-status* condition, these scores were reversed: the ingroup received 53 points and the outgroup 82 points; the norm score was the same. Care was taken to assure participants that these scores had been corrected for the number of group members: each group could gain a maximum of 100 points, regardless of the size of the group. Thus, it was explained that there was no *a priori* advantage or disadvantage for the majority group or the minority group.

Checks on the Manipulations

After participants had received all the information regarding the manipulations, and before they answered the dependent measures, three questions were asked to check whether they had understood the manipulations in the intended way. Participants were asked whether they were part of the group of inductive or deductive thinkers, whether their group was a minority or a majority group, and whether their group's performance on the group task was superior or inferior to the performance of the other group. Two participants did not indicate their group membership correctly; they were not included in further analyses.

Dependent Variables

In this study, we intended to measure self-categorisation, commitment to the group, and group self-esteem aspects of 'social identity', with 15 questions (e.g. 'I identify with other members of my group'). We further asked ten questions (see Table 2) to form analogous measures at the individual level for personal identity and personal self-esteem (a personal level equivalent of commitment to the group seems irrelevant). These measures were partly selected and adapted on the basis of existing measures (e.g. Brown, *et al.*, 1986; Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Ellemers, 1993; Rosenberg, 1965), and partly designed for the present study. All questions were answered on 7-point scales, with 1 indicating 'not at all' and 7 'very much'. Additionally, participants rated both groups on eight bipolar scales, four of which were related to the status defining dimension (e.g. unintelligent–intelligent), and four were alternative dimensions (e.g. dishonest–honest). These two sets of dimensions were included to offer participants in both group status conditions the opportunity to display ingroup favouritism without violating consensual definitions of social reality (see Blanz, Mummendey, & Otten, 1995; Ellemers, Van Rijswijk, Roefs, & Simons, 1997). Finally participants were asked to independently allocate points to each group, that is, they could allocate zero to 100 points to their own group, *and* zero to 100 points to the other group.

RESULTS

Group Self-esteem, Self-categorisation, and Commitment to the Group

One of the main purposes of the present investigation was to see whether we could distinguish between group self-esteem, self-categorisation and commitment to the

Table 1. Loadings of three aspects of social identity on three factors (after varimax rotation)

	Factor 1	2	3
Group self-esteem			
I think my group has little to be proud of	**0.70**	0.32	−0.06
I feel good about my group	**0.63**	0.37	0.36
I have little respect for my group	**0.77**	0.15	0.27
I would rather not tell that I belong to this group	**0.66**	−0.28	0.26
Self-categorisation			
I identify with other members of my group	0.14	**0.80**	0.19
I am like other members of my group	0.11	**0.82**	0.09
My group is an important reflection of who I am	0.06	**0.61**	0.27
Commitment to the group			
I would like to continue working with my group	0.16	0.31	**0.72**
I dislike being a member of my group	0.24	0.19	**0.76**
I would rather belong to the other group	0.14	0.09	**0.88**

group as three dimensions of social identity. Therefore, the 15 social identity items were subjected to principal components analysis. Initial results revealed three interpretable factors defined by ten items, while five items either loaded on more than one factor, or did not load on any of these three factors. Therefore, only ten items were retained for the final analyses. This revealed three factors with an Eigenvalue greater than 1, which together account for 65 per cent of the variance in the separate questions. The loadings of the separate questions on these three factors (after varimax rotation), clearly indicate that three subsets of questions constitute three different components (see Table 1).

The first factor is defined by four items reflecting the evaluative consequences of group membership. Therefore, we will refer to this component as '*group self-esteem*'. The second factor comprises three questions referring to the inclusion of the self in the group, or self-definition as a group member. Hence, this component will be termed '*self-categorisation*'. The three questions with the highest loadings on the third factor are related to group members' desire to continue acting as a group member and are therefore referred to as '*commitment to the group*'. In sum, this principal components analysis confirms that we may distinguish between evaluative, cognitive, and affective aspects of social identity, namely group self-esteem, self-categorisation, and commitment to the group.

When we combine all social identity questions into one unweighted mean score (alpha = 0.82), a 2 (Ingroup Status) × 2 (Ingroup Size) × 2 (Group Formation) analysis of variance reveals main effects of all three factors (Ingroup Status: $F(1,111) = 21.52$, $p < 0.001$, Ingroup Size: $F(1,111) = 4.92$, $p < 0.05$, and Group Formation: ($F(1,111) = 4.30$, $p < 0.05$). The relevant means indicate that overall social identity was higher in the High Status condition ($M = 5.15$) than in the Low Status condition ($M = 4.44$), it was higher in the Minority condition ($M = 5.01$) than in the Majority condition ($M = 4.61$), and it was higher when the group is Self-selected ($M = 4.99$) than when group membership is Assigned ($M = 4.68$). Additionally, there was a marginally significant interaction of Ingroup Size and Group Formation ($F(1,111) = 3.79$, $p < 0.054$), which qualifies the latter two main effects. The relevant

means indicate that social identity was lower for participants who were Assigned to the Majority group ($M = 4.36$), than participants for whom the Majority group was Self-selected ($M = 4.97$), or participants in the Minority conditions ($M = 5.01$ in both Group Formation conditions).

However, as we have argued in the introduction, the main reason to distinguish between these three aspects of social identity is that they are expected to be differentially affected by specific group characteristics, and that a further specification of these effects may help us understand seemingly inconsistent findings that are reported in the literature. In order to investigate whether the predicted relations can indeed be established, we included the three orthogonal (standardised) factor scores in a 2 (Ingroup Status) × 2 (Ingroup Size) × 2 (Group Formation) MANOVA.[3] As was the case with the overall mean score, this revealed multivariate significant main effects of Ingroup Status ($F(3,109) = 8.60$, $p < 0.001$), of Ingroup Size ($F(3,109) = 2.99$, $p < 0.05$), and Group Formation ($F(3,109) = 4.59$, $p < 0.01$). However, when we look at the univariate effects of the three factors, the picture becomes more differentiated. It turns out that the effect of Ingroup Status was only significant for the group self-esteem factor ($F(1,111)$ 5.74, $p < 0.05$), and the commitment factor ($F(1,111) =$ 16.09, $p < 0.001$). As predicted, group self-esteem was higher in the High Status condition ($M = 0.21$) than in the Low Status condition ($M = -0.23$). Furthermore, group members felt more strongly committed to the High Status group ($M = 0.34$) than to the Low Status group ($M = -0.37$). In contrast, the Ingroup Size effect was only significant for the self-categorisation factor ($F(1,111) = 8.58$, $p < 0.01$). In line with our theoretical argument, participants self-categorised stronger as members of a Minority group ($M = 0.27$) than as members of a Majority group ($M = -0.27$). Finally, at the univariate level the Group Formation effect was only significant for the commitment factor ($F(1,111) = 11.45$, $p < 0.001$), supporting our prediction that participants would feel more committed to a Self-selected group ($M = 0.33$), than to an Assigned group ($M = -0.24$). This main effect was qualified by a marginally significant interaction of Group Formation with Ingroup Size ($F(1,111) = 2.94$, $p < 0.09$), indicating that the Group Formation effect was more pronounced in the Majority condition (M(Self-selected) $= 0.43$; M(Assigned) $= -0.42$) than in the Minority Condition (M(Self-selected) $= 0.22$; M(Assigned) $= -0.05$).

Personal Identity and Personal Self-esteem

The ten questions intended to measure personal self-esteem and personal identity were first subjected to a principal components analysis to investigate whether the intended self-esteem and identity components could also be distinguished at the personal level. This resulted in a two-factorial solution, which accounts for 62% of the variance in the separate items. Furthermore, as the loadings on the two factors indicate, the varimax rotated factor solution revealed the intended subdivision into items related to self-esteem and items related to personal identification (see Table 2). The first factor is clearly defined by seven questions tapping the evaluative aspect of people's self-image, and is therefore termed '*personal self-esteem*'. The second factor comprises three questions focusing on the self-definition as a unique individual, and is

[3]The analysis of unweighted mean scores yields virtually identical effects.

Table 2. Loadings of personal level questions on two factors (after varimax-rotation)

	Factor	
	1	2
Personal self-esteem		
I have got what it takes	**0.75**	0.12
I think I have sufficient qualities	**0.82**	0.23
I generally feel like a failure	**0.80**	0.09
I can do most things just as well as others	**0.71**	0.07
I have nothing to be proud of	**0.74**	0.21
I feel good about myself	**0.83**	0.08
I am generally satisfied about myself	**0.75**	−0.09
Personal identification		
I see myself as someone with individual characteristics	0.34	**0.49**
I am different from other people	−0.09	**0.88**
I feel like a unique person	0.12	**0.84**

hence referred to as '*personal identification*'. As we did at the group level, we subjected the resulting factor scores to a 2 (Ingroup Status) × 2 (Ingroup Size) × 2 (Group Formation) MANOVA. This revealed a multivariate effect of Ingroup Size ($F(2,110) = 2.56,\ p < 0.08$), which was significant at the univariate level for the personal identification factor ($F(1,111) = 4.44, p < 0.05$). The relevant means indicate that participants showed stronger personal identification in the Minority condition ($M = 0.20$) than when they belonged to a Majority group ($M = -0.19$). Furthermore, there was a multivariate interaction of Ingroup Status and Group Formation ($F(2,110) = 2.47,\ p < 0.09$), as well as a multivariate interaction of Ingroup Size, Ingroup Status and Group Formation ($F(2,110) = 3.54, p < 0.05$). At the univariate level both these effects were only significant for the personal self-esteem factor ($F(1,111) = 4.51, p < 0.04$ and $F(1,111) = 6.67, p < 0.02$, respectively). When we look at the relevant means (see Table 3), it turns out that the group formation criterion did not affect personal self-esteem for members of high status groups. With low ingroup status, participants for whom membership in this group was self-selected showed lower personal self esteem than participants who were assigned to the group. This effect is qualified by the three-way interaction, which reveals that the interaction

Table 3. Means relevant to the two-way and three-way interactions for the personal self-esteem factor

	Group formation	
	Self-selected	Assigned
Ingroup status		
High	−0.02	−0.08
Low	−0.36	0.36

	Majority size		Minority size	
	Self-selected	Assigned	Self-selected	Assigned
Ingroup status				
High	0.22	−0.25	−0.25	0.09
Low	−0.82	0.45	0.10	0.26

between ingroup status and group formation was only significant in majority ($F(1,111) = 10.99$, $p < 0.001$) but not in minority groups ($F(1,111) < 1$, ns). Thus, the difference in self-esteem ratings between self-selected and assigned members of low status groups was caused by the majority condition, which implies that participants' personal self-esteem was lowest when their membership in a low-status majority group was self-selected, instead of assigned.

Group Ratings

The group ratings on eight evaluative dimensions were first combined into unweighted mean scores for the ingroup (alpha = 0.82) and the outgroup (alpha = 0.83). Then a differentiation score was calculated, by subtracting the average outgroup rating from the ingroup rating. This evaluative differentiation score was subjected to a 2 (Ingroup Status) × 2 (Ingroup Size) × 2 (Group Formation) analysis of variance. This first revealed that the overall mean differentiation deviates significantly from zero ($F(1,111) = 15.26$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that group members generally favoured the ingroup over the outgroup ($M = 0.29$). However, the Ingroup Status main effect ($F(1,111) = 13.72$, $p < 0.001$), indicates that ingroup favouritism was only displayed by members of the High Status ($M = 0.57$) rather than the Low Status ($M = -0.02$) Ingroup.[4] Additionally, a two-way interaction of Ingroup Size and Group Formation ($F(1,111) = 4.94$, $p < 0.05$) emerged. Inspection of the relevant means (see Table 4) and analysis of simple main effects reveals that the overall tendency to display ingroup favouritism in evaluative ratings did not emerge among participants who were assigned to a majority ingroup. Specifically, these group members were less inclined to show ingroup favouring evaluations than participants for whom majority group membership was self-selected ($F(1,111) = 7.23$, $p < 0.01$), or participants who were assigned to a minority group ($F(1,111) = 4.10$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4. Means relevant to the interaction of Ingroup Size and Group Formation on evaluative ingroup favouritism

Group formation	Ingroup size	
	Majority	Minority
Self-selected	0.56^{b}	0.29^{b}
Assigned	-0.00^{a}	0.39^{b}

(Only means with a different superscript deviate significantly from each other at $p < 0.05$).

[4]When we distinguish ratings on four 'competence-related' dimensions (competent, intelligent, good, motivated; alpha ingroup: 0.81; alpha outgroup: 0.80) from four 'alternative' dimensions (critical, honest, rational, close-knit; alpha ingroup: 0.71; alpha outgroup: 0.68), it turns out that the status main effect was caused by a reflection of the status manipulation on the competence related dimensions (High Status $M = 0.85$; Low Status $M = -0.32$; $F(1,111) = 31.91$, $p < 0.001$), while ingroup favouritism was displayed regardless of relative group status on the alternative dimensions (High Status $M = 0.27$; Low Status $M = 0.30$, $F(1,111) < 1$, ns). This is consistent with findings in previous investigations that studied intergroup differentiation on competence related and alternative dimensions (cf. Blanz, Mummendey, & Otten, 1995; Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997). However, a similar two-way interaction of Group Status and Group Formation emerged on both subsets of dimensions. For our present purposes, we are more interested in general patterns of intergroup differentiation. Therefore, and because a difference between the competence related and alternative dimensions only occurred with respect to the status main effect, we decided to retain the overall mean differentiation score for further analysis.

Outcome Allocation

We calculated an outcome differentiation measure, by subtracting the number of points allocated to the ingroup (0–100) from the points (0–100) allocated to the outgroup, and subjected this measure to a 2 (Ingroup Status) × 2 (Ingroup Size) × 2 (Group Formation) analysis of variance. The significant deviation of the overall mean score from zero ($F(1,111) = 5.88$, $p < 0.05$), indicates that participants were generally inclined to favour their ingroup in outcome allocations ($M = 2.87$). Additionally, an Ingroup Status main effect emerged ($F(1,111) = 62.61$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that High Status group members favoured the ingroup ($M = 11.03$), while Low Status group members tended to acknowledge the status difference in their outcome allocations, by favouring the outgroup ($M = -6.02$).

Ingroup Favouritism and Identification

In order to investigate the relation between identification and ingroup favouritism, we first conducted correlational analyses. As can be seen in Table 5, differentiation in evaluative ratings as well as outcome allocations is significantly correlated with social identification, and is not related to personal identification or personal self-esteem (the different components of social identity also were unrelated to personal identification or personal self-esteem, with non-significant correlations ranging from −0.20 to 0.20). This is in line with general predictions from social identity theory, as well as previous empirical findings. However, when we take a closer look at the three different components of social identity, it turns out that self-categorisation (the cognitive component) does not contribute to either form of differentiation. Group self-esteem (the evaluative component) shows a moderate relation with the two intergroup differentiation measures, and as predicted only affective commitment (the emotional component) is reliably correlated with displays of ingroup favouritism on both measures.

We further investigated the relation between social identification and ingroup favouritism by performing mediational analyses. Specifically, we explored whether the three components of social identification would differentially emerge as predictors of ingroup favouritism, and investigated whether inclusion of these covariates might (partly) account for effects of the independent variables on displays of ingroup favouritism. The analysis of covariance for the evaluative differentiation measure revealed a significant effect of the regression ($F(3,108) = 3.41$, $p < 0.05$). Of the three

Table 5. Correlations between social identity, personal identity, and differentiation in evaluations and outcome allocations

	Evaluative differentiation	Outcome differentiation
General social identity	0.39*	0.42*
Group self-esteem	0.20	0.23*
Self-categorisation	0.10	0.10
Group commitment	0.38*	0.40*
Personal self-esteem	0.06	0.09
Personal identity	0.21	0.00

Except the general social identity measure, these are all standardized scores. Significant correlations ($p < 0.01$) are marked with an asterisk (*).

components, only group commitment contributed significantly to the explanation of the variance in ingroup favouritism (beta = 0.25, $t = 2.71$, $p < 0.01$), while group self-esteem (beta = 0.17, $t = 1.83$, ns) and self-categorisation (beta = 0.08, $t < 1$, ns) did not emerge as significant predictors. Furthermore, the effect of Ingroup Status in the analysis of variance ($F(1,111) = 13.72$, $p < 0.001$) was substantially reduced in the analysis of covariance ($F(1,108) = 4.17$, $p < 0.05$), and the two-way interaction between Ingroup Size and Group Assignment that emerged in the analysis of variance ($F(1,111) = 4.94$, $p < 0.05$), was no longer significant after inclusion of the social identity components as covariates ($F(1,108) = 2.49$, ns). From these analyses we may conclude that our theoretical prediction is corroborated, in the sense that only the group commitment component of social identity reliably mediates evaluative intergroup differentiation.

In a similar vein, we assessed the mediating effects of the three social identity components on outcome differentiation. Again, the regression was significant in the analysis of covariance ($F(3,108) = 3.34$, $p < 0.05$), and group commitment was the only significant predictor of ingroup favouritism in outcome allocations (beta = 0.27, $t = 2.87$, $p < 0.01$), while group self-esteem (beta = 0.14, $t = 1.52$, ns) and self-categorisation (beta = 0.06 $t < 1$, ns) did not emerge as significant covariates. As was the case with evaluative differentiation, the main effect of Ingroup Status that emerged in the analysis of variance ($F(1,111) = 62.61$, $p < 0.001$) was substantially reduced in the analysis of covariance ($F(1,108) = 35.60$, $p < 0.001$).[5] Again, this indicates that only the group commitment component of social identity mediates intergroup differentiation in outcome allocation.

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate whether the theoretical distinction between three different components of social identity may help us understand why specific group characteristics affect reported levels of social identification. Furthermore, we wanted to establish the role each of the three aspects plays as a cause for people to behave in terms of their group membership (i.e. to display ingroup favouritism). As we have demonstrated, the 'traditional' consideration of the three components as related aspects of a single theoretical construct (which indeed seems acceptable in terms of the internal consistency of the overall scale) appears to indicate that relative ingroup size, relative ingroup status, and the group formation criterion all affect the extent to which people identify as a member of their group, which is consistent with previous research. However, in our view, *why* this is the case can only be understood when we disentangle the three components that are contained in the most commonly used definition of social identity (Tajfel, 1978).

[5]When *only* group commitment was included as a covariate in the analysis of variance, similar results are obtained. For the evaluative differentiation, again the regression was significant ($F(1,110) = 6.20$, $p < 0.05$; beta = 0.23, $t = 2.49$, $p < 0.05$), the effect of Ingroup Status was substantially reduced to ($F(1,110) = 7.05$, $p < 0.01$), and the two-way interaction between Ingroup Size and Group Assignment was no longer significant ($F(1,110) = 3.41$, ns). For outcome differentiation the regression was significant ($F(1,110) = 7.29$, $p < 0.01$; beta = 0.25, $t = 2.70$, $p < 0.01$), and the main effect of Ingroup Status was reduced ($F(1,110) = 44.10$, $p < 0.001$).

As predicted, group self-esteem (that is, the *evaluative* aspect of social identity) is only affected by the relative status of the ingroup, while the extent to which people self-categorize as group members (the *cognitive* aspect) solely depends on the relative size of the ingroup. Furthermore, it turns out that minority group members simultaneously report strong self-categorisation as group members *and* strong personal identification. This is in line with Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory as well as Simon's analysis (Simon & Brown, 1987; Simon & Hamilton, 1994), who both argue that social and personal identities can be more easily reconciled in minority rather than majority groups. For our present argument it is important to note that relative ingroup size only affects self-categorisation, but not group self-esteem. This may help us understand why strong group identification can be observed among minority group members, even if this may seem unfavourable in terms of the value connotation of their group membership (see also Ellemers, & Van Rijswijk, 1997). In a more general sense, this corroborates our argument that the two components are relatively independent of each other, which implies that a threat to group self-esteem does not necessarily lead people to avoid self-categorisation in terms of that particular group membership, or *vice versa*.

Affective commitment to the group (the *emotional* aspect of social identification) turns out to depend both on the way groups have been formed and on the relative status of these groups. Thus, group commitment is enhanced when people have self-selected their group membership, *or* when the group turns out to have relatively high status. It is important to note that these two main effects occur independently of each other. This implies that even when a particular group has low status, people may show relatively strong group commitment when their membership in this group was self-selected rather than externally imposed (cf. Turner *et al*., 1984). Furthermore, it turned out that the reluctance to feel emotionally involved with an assigned group membership is exacerbated when the group in question constitutes a majority, which does not offer the opportunity to distinguish oneself as a distinct individual, as we have argued above. Indeed, an externally imposed membership in a majority group not only resulted in the lowest level of group commitment but also led people to refrain from showing ingroup favouritism in evaluative group ratings. Thus, it seems that the independent effects of different group characteristics may reinforce each other when combined, which is also evident from our observation that personal self-esteem is lowest for those who have self-selected their membership in a low status majority group.

In our theoretical analysis we argued, in line with social identity theory, that group commitment is the main aspect of social identity that affects people's tendency to behave in terms of their group membership. Indeed, we referred to the inconsistent findings with respect to the relation between group status and ingroup favouritism, to argue that while low group status may reliably threaten group self-esteem, the display of ingroup favouritism (i.e. showing a group-level response to such threat) depends on the extent to which people feel committed to the group. When we look at the results we obtained with respect to ingroup favouritism, it turns out that people are most inclined to favour the ingroup (both in terms of evaluative ratings and outcome allocations) when it has relatively high status. In contrast, members of lower status groups tend to acknowledge this state of affairs in their group ratings and outcome allocations. A similar pattern of results has been observed in previous studies (e.g. Blanz *et al*., 1995; Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997; Ellemers *et al*., 1997), where it

was explained by arguing that consensual definitions of social reality may restrict the extent to which lower-status group members feel free to claim ingroup superiority on evaluative dimensions or feel justified to favour their group in outcome allocations. In fact, such reality constraints have been cited as one possible reason why lower status group members may refrain from showing ingroup favouritism (Hinkle & Brown, 1990), while they may nevertheless be motivated to perceive (and depict) their group in a positive way.

More relevant to our present argument, however, is the way in which these displays of ingroup favouritism are related to the three components of social identity. First, it is important to note that ingroup favouritism can indeed be considered a *group-level* response to the social situation, in the sense that (contrary to what is suggested by Crocker, Thompson, McGraw, & Ingerman, 1987) ingroup favouritism is only related to people's social identity, and not to their personal identity or personal self-esteem. Furthermore, when we differentiate between the three components of social identity, analyses of covariance corroborate our theoretical prediction. It turns out that only the group commitment aspect of social identity reliably mediates displays of ingroup favouritism on evaluative and allocation measures. As we have argued in the introduction, this may help us understand the seemingly contradictory finding that low group status may result in decreased social identification on the one hand, but in increased ingroup favouritism on the other hand. The results of the present investigation enable us to specify that although low group status may negatively affect both group self-esteem as well as group commitment (i.e. the evaluative and the emotional components of social identity), other independent group characteristics (such as the group formation criterion) may in turn reinforce a sense of affective involvement with one's group (the emotional component). Importantly, only the group commitment aspect of social identity mediates the tendency to behave in terms of one's group membership, albeit that the way this is expressed can be constrained by social reality, as we have seen above.

An important aim of the present study was to disentangle the three components of social identity, as well as the role they play as mediators of social behaviour. In line with our analysis based on original formulations of social identity theory, group commitment appears to be the key aspect of social identity which drives the tendency for people to behave in terms of their group membership. Furthermore, we established that, compared to an assigned group affiliation, people tend to feel more committed to self-selected (or achieved) group memberships, and this differential group commitment emerges relatively independently of other group features, such as its relative status. As far as we know, the present study is the first in which this difference between assigned versus self-selected group memberships is studied experimentally. Indeed, although we would argue that processes similar to those observed here may be responsible for previously documented differences in responses between members of natural and artificially created social groups, this has so far not been systematically established. Consequently, we feel that future research should be sensitive to possible effects of such features of social groups. More generally, the results of the present study underline that, in order to understand the psychological processes involved, it is essential to aim for more conceptual precision in theory and research on intergroup relations.

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