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Predicting the Paths of Peripherals:
The Interaction of Identification and Future Possibilities

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Abstract

Two studies investigated how both level of identification with a group and the individual's position within the group influence aspects of group loyalty. We considered ingroup position both in terms of the individual's current position within a group and expectations concerning the likelihood that one's position might change in the future. Peripheral group members learned that their acceptance by other group members would improve in the future or that they could expect rejection by other group members. Being peripheral evoked less negative and more positive emotions when acceptance in the future was expected. Group identification moderated the effects of expected future intragroup position on measures of group loyalty. When group members anticipated future rejection, they were less likely to emphasize ingroup homogeneity (Study 1), less motivated to work for the group (Study 2) and less positive about a motivated group member (Study 2), the less they identified with the group. In contrast, when future acceptance was expected, those who were less identified with the group were motivated to work for the group. The importance of group identification and future expectations for predicting current group behavior is stressed.

Predicting the Paths of Peripherals:

The Interaction of Identification and Future Possibilities

Social psychologists have made important advances in understanding group behavior, particularly that of “prototypical” group members (e.g., Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997; Moreland, 1985; Moreland, Levine, & Cini, 1993). Prototypical group members are more likely to be group leaders (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonski, 1992; Hains, Hogg, & Duck, 1997), be successful in eliciting attitude change in others (van Knippenberg, Lossie, & Wilke, 1994), be evaluated more positively than other group members (Hogg & Hardie, 1991), and they are more likely to define the group's norms and act in accordance with those norms (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The present research, in contrast, focuses on group members who are not, or are not yet, perceived as prototypical of the group.

Though less often investigated, peripheral or “non-prototypical” group members are potentially more intriguing because their behaviors have proven to be even more difficult to predict compared to that of prototypical members (Schmitt & Branscombe, in press). Peripherals who are less typical or central to the group, are more variable in their behaviors than prototypicals. Peripheral status can lead people to deviate from group norms (e.g., Lewin, 1948), but it can also encourage people to attempt to satisfy the norms of the group even more strenuously (e.g., Breakwell, 1979; Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995; Tajfel, 1978). Some people who do not feel accepted by a group may react in ways that damage the group (e.g., by criticizing or even betraying it), while others who are marginalized will nevertheless remain loyal to the group.

The question we address in the current research is what determines when a marginalized member of a group will continue to strive to be accepted, and when rejection by the group will motivate them to reject that group in return? We argue that among peripheral group members, group behavior will depend on whether they see the context as offering hope for acceptance and inclusion (or not) in the future. We adopt an interactionist perspective that takes into account social reality—the possibilities provided in a given context—and person-based factors such as degree of group identification. By considering both of these factors, we should be able to predict the form and direction of reactions to peripheral status (Turner, 1999; Spears, Doosje & Ellemers, 1999).

Peripheral group membership

According to self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985; Turner et al., 1987), the prototypical position in a group represents the shared views of group members concerning the group as a whole. Some ingroup members are “better” examples of the ingroup than others because they more closely match the group prototype. Given that group membership can be quite important to people’s self-definitions, having a marginal position within a group can evoke insecurity in the individual (Lewin, 1948; Noel et al., 1995). Indeed, those who differ from other group members in terms of age, gender, or race experience heightened self-consciousness (Kramer, 1998), will be more uncertain how to act, and are generally more anxious about acceptance in the group than prototypical group members (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Louis, 1980; Moreland, 1985; Van Maanen, 1977).

Although being peripheral in a valued group may induce negative affect, reactions may depend on expectations about one's future prospects in that group. Recent research has revealed that even though a group member's current position might be peripheral, the mere anticipation of a change of position in the future differentially influences self-esteem and group behavior (Jetten, Branscombe, & Spears, in press; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Such work demonstrates the importance of investigating group processes from a dynamic perspective, and taking into account future expectations of group members (see also Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Levine & Moreland, 1994; Worchel, 1998).

Group identification

Given that receiving feedback that one is peripheral to the group can be perceived as threatening to the self, we predicted that group identification would differentially affect how group members respond to feedback about their likely future intragroup position. Those who are strongly committed to the group often act collectively when their identity is threatened and stick to the group in difficult times, whereas those who are less involved in the group are more likely to use individualistic strategies to cope with identity threats (Branscombe, Wann, Noel, & Coleman, 1993; Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). Indeed, the group-relevant behavior of low identifiers is often driven by more strategic and instrumental considerations than is the behavior of high identifiers (Barreto & Ellemers, 2000).

Accordingly, we predicted that the more members identify with their group, the less their loyalty to the group should be dependent on expectations concerning their own future position within the group (Doosje, Spears, & Ellemers, in press). In contrast, on the basis of research showing that behavior is more strongly guided by self-presentational and strategic motives among low identifiers (Barreto & Ellemers, 2000; Postmes, Branscombe, Spears & Young, 1999), it was expected that group members' loyalty would be most strongly influenced by future expectations when group identification was low. We predicted that group loyalty would be shown when low identifiers perceive they have a future in the group, but that they would not invest in the group when they expected rejection in the future.

In order to test these ideas, we focused on group members who had only recently joined the focal group (first year university students). Data for both studies were collected in the beginning of the academic year. Because their student identity should be quite important to these new students, the peripheral manipulation was expected to have a negative impact. All participants received information that they were peripheral to their student group. We then varied the feedback they received about their future in the group. Specifically, group members received feedback that they would be accepted by others in the group in the future, or they were led to believe they could expect rejection by other more prototypical group members in the future.

To assess the effects of expected future intragroup position, we first measured the emotional impact of different future expectations. In addition, we included group loyalty measures in both studies. In Study 1, we chose to examine ingroup homogeneity as a measure of group loyalty because it taps the extent to which group members are motivated to unobtrusively defend their threatened identity (Doosje, Ellemers & Spears, 1995; Lee & Ottati, 1995; Pickett & Brewer, in press; Rothgerber, 1997). Study 2 differed from the first study in that responses were more public. This context allowed us to examine public expressions of group loyalty. The loyalty measure involved the extent to which group members are willing to exert themselves on behalf of the group (Ouwkerk, Ellemers, & De Gilder, 1999). In addition, evaluations of other group members who are motivated to work for the group were measured. Participants' loyalty to the group should be revealed when they must publicly approve or disapprove of other group members who are loyal to the group.

Study 1

Future expectations of rejection or acceptance and extent of identification with the group were expected to affect emotional responses to peripheral status. It was predicted that emotions would vary depending on whether a change in intragroup status was expected or not. Certainty that one has been rejected should be more threatening to the self and evoke less positive emotions than when one's peripheral status might improve in the future.

Group loyalty was examined by assessing how perceptions of ingroup variability were affected by future expectations and commitment to the group. We chose to measure group variability because this is a rather indirect measure of group loyalty or commitment. Indirect measures have the advantage that respondents are less likely to consciously manipulate their self-presentation on such measures as might be the case with a more direct or obtrusive measure. Group identification has been found to be a critical moderator of the extent to which group members stress homogeneity of the ingroup as a collective response to external threat (Doosje, Spears, Ellemers, & Koomen, 1999). Under conditions of threat, high identifiers emphasize homogeneity of the ingroup, whereas low identifiers perceive the ingroup as heterogeneous.

We predicted that low and high identifiers would differ in the extent to which they emphasize ingroup homogeneity in the face of peripherality threat. Specifically, we predicted that these differences should be most apparent when group members feel that they will not be accepted by more prototypical group members in the future. When group members expect rejection, lower identification should be associated with less loyalty in terms of stressing ingroup

heterogeneity (see Doosje, Spears & Koomen, 1995; Doosje et al., 1999).

However, when there is an expectation of group acceptance in the future, low identifiers might be just as motivated as those higher in identification to show loyalty to the ingroup. When group members expect future acceptance, we predicted that perceptions of ingroup homogeneity would be relatively unaffected by degree of group identification.

Method

Design and participants. The design consisted of one manipulated variable, expected future intragroup position (expect rejection vs. expect acceptance), and one measured variable, group identification. Undergraduates (110 female; 33 male) at the University of Queensland (UQ) participated in this study. The average age of participants was 21 years, and they received partial course credit for their participation.

Procedure. The study consisted of two sessions, separated by one week. The Session 1 questionnaire was said to be part of a project assessing the views of students at the University of Queensland. A measure of identification with the group “University of Queensland students” was administered, along with items assessing the participant’s perceived typicality as a UQ student. To enhance the credibility of the manipulation of future intragroup position, some additional measures relating to personal beliefs were collected. For instance, participants were asked to describe in their own words what it meant to them to be a student at UQ. Participants were told that their responses would be analyzed and interpreted by clinical psychology students who would create a personal profile of them on the basis of their responses to these questions. It was stated that the aim of this

study was to train clinical graduate students in the interpretation of test data and in the creation of personal profiles based on test information. In addition, participants were told that we wanted to examine how they fit with the group “UQ students.” Participants were informed that their personal profile would be scored and provided to them in the second session.

In Session 2, participants were told that the clinical graduate student had examined all of their answers and calculated a typicality score indicating how well they fit into the group “UQ students,” and had created a personal profile for them so they could understand why they received the typicality score that they did.

Participants were then presented with a graph that represented the typicality scores of 836 University of Queensland students who participated in a similar study the year before. They were told that seeing their own score in comparison to this large sample would make it easier for them to interpret their own typicality score. On a continuum ranging from “not at all typical” (50) to “very typical” (100), they saw a histogram of the frequency distribution of the typicality scores of the large sample. The distribution was highly negatively skewed with the large majority of the scores within the 95-100 range (65%), and a gradual decrease of scores below 95. It was explained to participants that the higher the score, the more typical the person is of this group. Similarly, the lower the score, the less the person fits in with, and the less they are typical of the group of UQ students. There were no scores lower than 60. The participant’s own score was indicated in the histogram with an arrow, and all participants learned that their typicality score was 80. Because of the highly skewed distribution,

approximately 20% of the sample appeared to be even more peripheral than the participant, and 80% of the sample seemed to be more prototypical than the participant. Participants were asked to take some time to consider their score and to complete the perceived prototypicality manipulation check.

Independent variables. After receiving the frequency distribution, participants were presented with the written clinical report explaining how their responses in the previous session were interpreted.

In the expect rejection condition, participants were told: “We have found in the past that people with a similar profile to yours often have a hard time being accepted by the UQ student group because of the lack of fit between their profile and that typical of UQ students. In short, because of the difference between yourself and the group ‘UQ students’ you appear to be the sort of person who will have difficulty being accepted by other more typical students at the University of Queensland in the future (which is not to say you won't be accepted by other groups).” Participants in the expect acceptance condition were told: “We have found in the past that people with a similar profile to yours are likely to be generally accepted by the group ‘UQ students.’ In short, despite the current differences between yourself and the group ‘UQ students’ you appear to be the sort of person who will have little difficulty being accepted by other more typical UQ students in the future.” The report was signed by the bogus clinical psychology student and by their supervisor.

Dependent measures. All measures were assessed on 9-point scales ranging from "1, strongly disagree"(1) to 9, "strongly agree"(9). In session Session 1, social degree of identification was measured with four4 items ($\alpha =$

.70), taken from the importance of identity subscale of Crocker and Luhtanen's (1990) collective self-esteem scale. This measure consists of statements about the extent to which participants identify with, feel attached to, and value being a member of the group "UQ students". Overall identification was quite high ($M = 6.72$), confirming that their student identity was an important one for our participants. The success of the peripheral manipulation was assessed by asking participants in both sessions to indicate their agreement with the statements: "I have a lot in common with other UQ students", "I am a good example of a UQ student", and "I am a typical UQ student" (Jetten et al., 1997). The reliability of these three items was satisfactory at both time periods ($\alpha = .85$ and $.90$, respectively).

Emotional reactions following the future intragroup manipulation were tapped with four positive (hopeful, happy, satisfied, self-confident) and four negative items (disappointed, rejected, frustrated, angry). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which each of these described how they felt at that moment on a 9-point scale ranging from 1, feel not at all to 9, feel very much. Negative emotions were recoded and combined with the positive emotions into a scale ($\alpha = .89$). In addition, an open-ended item immediately following the expected future acceptance feedback assessed emotional reactions to this manipulation: "We would like to know what your reaction is to this typicality feedback. Please describe in a few words how you feel at this moment." Responses to this question were coded as negative (-1), neutral (0) or positive (+1) by two independent coders (Cohen's kappa = .70), where discrepancies were resolved by discussion.

Perceived ingroup homogeneity was measured by four questions asking the extent to which students at UQ can be seen as different from each other, similar to one another, whether they form a coherent group, and whether they form a well-defined group (Jetten, Spears, Hogg, & Manstead, 2000). These items (the first item being reverse-scored) formed a satisfactory scale ($\alpha = .56$).

Results

Manipulation checks. All variables were analysed using multiple regression procedures. For these analyses, group identification scores were centred and the manipulation of expected future intragroup position was dummy coded. The interaction term was calculated by multiplying group identification by the expected future intragroup position code, as specified by Aiken and West (1991).

In line with the manipulation, overall perceived prototypicality decreased for all participants from Session 1 ($M = 5.80$) to Session 2 ($M = 5.41$), $t(142) = 2.86$, $p < .01$. Two regressions were conducted to check whether the reduction in self-perceived prototypicality over time was affected differently by prior identification. Analyses of the self-perceived prototypicality measure in Session 1 revealed only a main effect for identification, $F(1, 141) = 54.76$, $p < .001$, indicating that the more participants identified with the group the more they felt prototypical. Analyses of the self-perceived prototypicality measure in Session 2, with Session 1 prototypicality entered at step 1, revealed only a significant effect for Session 1 prototypicality, $F(1, 141) = 17.22$, $p < .001$, ruling out the possibility that prior identification did affect the reduction in perceived self-prototypicality over time.

Emotions. The emotion index was regressed on identification, expected future intragroup position and their interaction. Only a significant main effect for expected future intragroup position was obtained, $F(1,140) = 4.96, p < .001$. Those who were peripheral and expected future rejection experienced less positive emotions ($M = 6.07$), compared to those who received feedback that they were peripheral but could expect to be accepted by the group in the future ($M = 7.22$).

Next, the responses to the open-ended item assessing emotional reactions to the future intragroup position manipulation were categorized. 18.9% were classified into the positive emotion category (e.g., “I am fairly pleased with this feedback”) and 15.4% in the negative emotions category (e.g., “I feel pretty disappointed that I will not fit in very easily”). The majority of the responses (65.7%) were categorized in the neutral category and consisted of statements that people felt unaffected by the feedback (e.g., “I am not too worried about this information”), and those where no particular emotions were mentioned. The coded responses were analyzed in a regression and only a significant main effect for expected future intragroup position was obtained, $F(1, 141) = 29.70, p < .001$. In line with the Likert scale findings, those who anticipated rejection expressed more negative emotions ($M = -0.21$), while those who expected acceptance expressed more positive emotions ($M = 0.29$).

Ingroup homogeneity. Analysis of the ingroup homogeneity ratings revealed only an interaction between identification and expected future intragroup position, $F(1, 141) = 5.62, p < .02$. The interaction is displayed in Figure 1. Analysis of the slopes revealed, in line with predictions, that when participants

expected rejection, the less participants identified with their group, the less they perceived ingroup homogeneity, $\beta = .36$, $p < .01$. In contrast, perceived ingroup homogeneity was unaffected by level of identification when participants expected acceptance in the future, $\beta = .01$, ns.

Discussion

Expectations about future intragroup position affected how current peripheral status was emotionally experienced. Expecting rejection led to less positive emotions compared to feedback that future acceptance was likely. The open-ended response measure revealed a similar pattern of results: Peripherals who expected rejection experienced more negative emotions whereas those who anticipated being accepted in the future reported more positive emotions. Only main effects for expected future intragroup position were found on this measure, suggesting that all group members were emotionally affected by the expected rejection versus acceptance manipulation. The fact that identification did not have an effect is not surprising. It is consistent with the notion that all group members perceived these states as threatening and rewarding respectively.

Perceptions of ingroup homogeneity were assumed to reflect the extent to which group members are loyal to the group in the face of peripherality threat. In line with predictions, when group members expected rejection, they were more likely to stress the group's diversity and heterogeneity the less they identified with the group (Doosje, Ellemers & Spears, 1995). It seems that low identifiers who expect rejection cope with it in an individualistic way by believing that having a peripheral position is not meaningful because the group itself is highly heterogeneous (Doosje, Spears & Koomen, 1995). In contrast, this often observed

difference between low and high identifiers in perceived group homogeneity was not apparent when peripheral group members expected acceptance in the future. Low identifiers who anticipated acceptance by the group in the future perceived the group as equally homogeneous as the high identifiers. Stressing homogeneity may be one way in which group members can strategically accentuate their group affiliation in order to safeguard their future. Regardless of their future expectancies, high identifiers stressed the ingroup's homogeneity. It may be that high identifiers do not stress heterogeneity as a coping strategy because emphasizing the diversity of the ingroup would undermine the social category itself (Doosje, Ellemers & Spears, 1995).

Study 2

To further test our hypothesis regarding differential strategic behavior by low versus high identifiers as a function of future expectancies among peripheral group members, measures were taken of the extent to which group members are willing to exert themselves on behalf of the group (see Ouwerkerk et al. 1999). In addition, measures assessing evaluation of another group member who is highly motivated to work for the group were collected. In this study we also included a control condition where participants were told that they were peripheral, but no information was given about future expectations. Inclusion of this control condition allows us to determine more precisely whether responses by low identifiers are due to strategic considerations or a general lack of motivation to work for the group. In addition, responses were made more public than in the prior study, with participants being informed that their motivational and

evaluation responses would be known to other group members. We expected that this more public procedure would amplify strategic responses.

As in Study 1, we predicted that group identification would interact with expected future intragroup position. When group members expected rejection, the lower their level of group identification the less they should be willing to work for the group. In contrast, we predicted no differences as a function of identification in terms of motivation to exert effort on behalf of the group when there was an expectation of becoming more prototypical in the future. We predicted that responses in the control condition would fall in between the two future expectation conditions.

We expected that when group members are asked to express publicly their liking of a motivated group member, their responses would be affected by the extent to which they perceive themselves as having a future in the group. Thus, a similar pattern of results was predicted for the evaluation of motivated group members as for the motivation to work for the group measure.

Method

Design and participants. The design consisted of one manipulated variable, expected future intragroup position (control, expect rejection, expect acceptance), and group identification, which was measured. Undergraduates (44 females; 36 males) at the University of Kansas participated in partial fulfillment of course requirements. Their average age was 20 years.

Procedure. In this study, participants were told that we were investigating how well they fit into the group 'University of Kansas students' (KU). Again, participants were given a profile that was ostensibly written by a clinical

psychology student on the basis of their responses in Session 1. This allowed for the manipulation of future expectancies (expect rejection vs. expect acceptance). In the control condition, in which participants received the histogram with the information about their own score indicating that they were peripheral, no written profile about future expectancies was provided. In order to introduce a new measure to assess willingness to work for the group, participants were informed in Session 2 that in the last part of the study we were going to split them into subgroups of 4 to 5 persons. They were told that we would be asking them, as a group, to raise some problems that they perceive the university to be facing, discuss them with the other group members, and to come up with some solutions to these problems. Participants then completed the dependent measures after which they were informed that the group discussion task would not take place.

Dependent measures. All items were measured on 9-point scales ranging from "strongly disagree"(1) to "strongly agree"(9). Social identification was again measured in Session 1 with the importance to identity subscale of Crocker and Luhtanen's (1990) collective self-esteem scale ($\alpha = .75$). Overall identification as a university student was again quite high ($M = 6.41$). The manipulation of peripherality was checked both in Session 1 and Session 2 with the same three items as were used in Study 1 ($\alpha = .89$ and $.95$, respectively).

Motivation to work for the group. Before the group discussion was to begin, we asked participants how much effort they wanted to put into the group task. The time participants were willing to spend working on the group task was ostensibly going to be taken into account before starting the actual task. Two questions were presented, regarding the minimum and the maximum amount of

time (in minutes) they were willing to spend discussing issues about their group (KU) with other students (between 5 and 30 minutes). Responses to these two questions were averaged as a measure of motivation to work for the group.

Evaluation of group members. Participants were asked to rate a group member who was willing to work on the group task for 30 minutes (the maximum) on a scale ranging from very negative (1) to very positive (9).

Results

Manipulation checks. Consistent with the feedback given indicating that participants were peripheral group members, the overall level of perceived prototypicality decreased in Session 2 ($M = 5.63$) compared to Session 1 ($M = 6.08$), $t(79) = 2.08$, $p < .05$. As in Study 1, two regressions were conducted to check whether the reduction in self-perceived prototypicality over time was affected differently by prior identification. Analysis of session 1 perceived self-prototypicality scores revealed only a main effect for group identification, $F(1, 74) = 82.28$, $p < .001$. The more participants identified with the group the more they felt prototypical. Analyses of the self-perceived prototypicality measure of Session 2, with Session 1 prototypicality entered at step 1, revealed only a significant effect for session 1 prototypicality, $F(1, 74) = 11.63$, $p < .001$, ruling out the possibility that prior identification did affect the reduction in perceived self-prototypicality over time.

Motivation to work for the group. Analyses were conducted using hierarchical multiple regressions in which the manipulation of expected future intragroup position was coded into two dummy variables, with the control condition assigned a value of 0 in both dummy variables (see Aiken & West,

1991). The first dummy variable compares the expect rejection condition to the control condition and the second dummy variable compares the expect acceptance condition to the control condition. Two interaction terms were calculated by multiplying the centered group identification score with the two dummy coded variables. Main effects were entered at the first step and the two interaction terms were entered at step 2.

Analysis of the average amount of time that participants were willing to spend discussing problems facing KU with other students revealed a main effect for the second dummy coded variable of expected future intragroup position, $F(3, 73) = 2.60, p < .01$. A significant amount of additional variance was explained by entering the two interaction terms at the second step, $R^2_{\text{change}} = .13, F_{\text{change}}(5, 71) = 5.77, p < .01$. The interaction is displayed in Figure 2. Simple slope analyses revealed that those who expected future acceptance were more willing to spend time on the group task the lower their identification with the group, $\beta = -.53, p < .01$. In contrast, those who expected future rejection were more willing to spend time on the group task the higher their identification with the group, $\beta = .38, p = .058$. Group motivation was not affected by level of identification for those in the control condition, $\beta = -.01, ns$.

Evaluation of motivated group member. Analyses of the evaluation made for a motivated group member who was willing to work on the task for the 30 minute maximum revealed a main effect for the second dummy coded variable of expected future intragroup position, $F(3, 73) = 1.95, p < .05$. A significant amount of additional variance was explained by entering the two interaction terms at the second step, $R^2_{\text{change}} = .08, F_{\text{change}}(5, 71) = 3.79, p < .05$. The interaction is

displayed in Figure 3. Simple slope analyses revealed that those who expected future rejection evaluated a motivated group members more positively the higher their identification with the group, $\beta = .49$, $p = .01$. The evaluation of a motivated group member was not affected by level of identification for those in the control condition, $\beta = -.02$, ns, or those in the expect acceptance condition, $\beta = .14$, ns.

Discussion

Consistent with the results of our first study, the effects of future intragroup position on loyalty differed depending on initial level of group identification. The expected future intragroup position manipulation had a greater impact on group loyalty the lower the identification. When group members expected future rejection, they were less willing to work for the group the lower their identification with the group. Although not predicted, we also found that when group members expected acceptance, they were more motivated to work for the group the lower their identification (see also Noel et al., 1995). Apparently, the more public procedure in Study 2 compared to Study 1 did amplify the strategic responses of low identifiers, creating greater differences between low and high identifiers than were observed previously when group members expected acceptance. In line with predictions, identification did not affect motivation to work for the group in the control group.

Support for the predictions was also found on the evaluation of a motivated group member. Those who expected rejection were more negative about a motivated group member than those who expected acceptance in the future. Thus, expecting future acceptance made group members more positive about a loyal group member. In addition, it was found that the lower the identification, the harsher group members were in their judgment of a motivated group member when they expected rejection. Presumably, the lower the identification, the less one can appreciate loyalty by other group members when one expects to be rejected by the group in the future.

General Discussion

The results of both studies demonstrate that even though all participants were currently peripheral group members, their behavior was differentially affected by their expected future intragroup position depending on their level of identification. This finding buttresses our argument that group members often have their past and future with the group in mind when evaluating their current group membership. It also supports our contention that anticipated temporal changes in intragroup positioning can exert important effects on group processes.

In Study 1, independent of identification, all group members experienced more negative emotions when they expected future rejection and more positive emotions when they anticipated acceptance in the future. However, as expected, loyalty to the group did vary according to degree of group identification on these future expectations. The more group members identified with the group, the more maintaining ingroup homogeneity appeared to be a sufficiently strong goal that it occurred regardless of expectations about the self's future position in the group (Doosje & Ellemers, 1997; Spears et al., 1999). However, the lower the commitment to the group, the more expected future intragroup position had an impact. Presumably driven by strategic considerations (e.g., in order to safeguard their future position in the group), those lower in identification stressed ingroup homogeneity to the same extent as those higher in identification when they expected future acceptance. In other words, the often observed difference in perceived ingroup homogeneity between low and high identifiers was not replicated when future acceptance was seen as likely. Low identifiers can be made to act like high identifiers when they anticipate an increase in group acceptance in

the future. However, when peripheral group members expected future rejection, those lower in identification stressed the heterogeneity of the group. This finding is in line with previous research and suggests that stressing heterogeneity represents an attempt to undermine the validity of the feedback that one is peripheral (“we are all different”; Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995).

In Study 2 we obtained additional evidence for our hypothesis that low identifiers are more alert to what the group can offer them in the future compared to high identifiers. Low identifiers invested in the group and behaved as ‘good’ group members when something could be gained in the future and when such ingratiating behavior might be expected to pay off in terms of bringing greater acceptance (Noel et al., 1995; Vonk, 1998). When it seemed to be only a matter of time before they would be fully accepted within the group, as level of identification decreased, the more likely group members were to be motivated to work for the group. However, when future aspirations to become more prototypical in the group were thwarted, and when continued rejection could be expected, lower identification was associated with less motivation to work for the group, and devaluation of a loyal group member. Thus, the difference between those with low versus high commitment to the group became obvious when no improvement in intragroup standing could be achieved in the future. High identifiers stood by the group even though other group members were not going to be more accepting of their atypicality in the future, while low identifiers did not invest in the group any further. This pattern of results is consistent with other research showing that high identifiers are more likely to stick by their group

through thick and thin rather than bailing out when the going gets tough (see Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997).

While the effects on the different indices of group loyalty (ingroup homogeneity perceptions, group motivation and evaluation of a loyal group member) were quite similar when participants expected rejection, the pattern of results was slightly different when group members expected future acceptance on the group motivation measure of Study 2. No differences were found between those low and high in identification when group members expected future acceptance on indirect indices of group motivation (perceived ingroup variability; Study 1, and evaluation of another group member; Study 2), but lower identification led to increased loyalty on the more direct measure of willingness to work for the group (Study 2). It might be the case that it was clearer for group members what a 'good group member' response was on the more direct measure than on the indirect measures. Therefore, especially when responses are assumed to be driven by strategic considerations, different patterns of results are likely to emerge on direct versus more indirect measures because different measures are likely to differ in their sensitivity to different social motivations. This point should be pursued in future research.

Final remarks

In theoretical terms, the present studies show that understanding the reactions of peripheral group members, and specifically predicting whether they will strive to achieve acceptance by the group or give up on it, we have to take into account both aspects of the context (the future possibilities contained in the situation), and features of the person (their initial degree of commitment to the

group). Social identity theorists have argued that an interactionist perspective that takes into account aspects of both context and commitment is necessary for understanding the diverse psychological and behavioral outcomes that can occur in group contexts (Spears et al., 1999; Turner, 1999). The commitment of high identifiers appears to inoculate them against the problem of rejection by their group so that they give unconditional loyalty to the group. However, low identifiers are prepared to work for the group only when the reality of the situation affords them some hope and some scope to do so. Such an interactionist approach helps us to understand the diverse and sometimes opposite paths taken by peripheral group members. It helps to explain why some people give up on, or even turn against, groups in which they are marginalized, whereas others in this same position continue to give their undivided loyalty. In other words, to understand the behavior of deviant, marginal, stigmatized, or otherwise peripheral members of groups we cannot assume they will all behave similarly. Rather, we need to understand the peripheral group member's relation to the group and group's relation to them.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. Study 1: Ingroup homogeneity as a function of group identification and expected future intragroup position.

Figure 2. Study 2: Motivation to work for the group as a function of group identification and expected future intragroup position.

Figure 3. Study 2: Evaluation of a motivated group member as a function of group identification and expected future intragroup position.







