The choice of idols from a social psychological perspective

by

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ABSTRACT

The study of adolescents' idols has an over 100-year tradition. The meta-analysis of Teigen, Normann, Bjorkheim and Helland (2000) showed that idols, which are commonly understood as role models, changed over the last century which is attributed to changes in the social context. The present paper argues that Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) offers an appropriate theoretical framework to conceptualize social context by hypothesising a functional relationship between idols and identity management strategies moderated by the status position of the adolescent's group s/he belongs to. The hypothesised functional relationship was tested in two studies with white and black adolescent South Africans. The results of the two studies supported our assumptions that the functional relationship between idols and identity management strategies is indeed moderated by status position. The results also indicate that Social Identity Theory seems to be an appropriate theoretical framework when social context is particularly conceptualised as social change.

INTRODUCTION

The study of adolescents' idols has an over 100 year tradition. The pioneer study that asked "Who would you most like to be like" was conducted by Estelle Darrah in 1898 in the United States which was followed by a series of studies in various countries during the 20th century. As various were the times and places of study of idols of adolescents, as various were the idols reported in these studies. These idols, however, had something in common, namely to represent different spheres within society from politics, science, to charity, entertainment, religion, and/or family.

Teigen, Normann, Bjorkheim and Helland (2000), conducted a meta-analysis of idol studies and showed that adolescents' idols changed during the 20th century. Two major shifts were identified: first, idols changed from national-historical figures towards more contemporary (international) figures, and secondly, from "others as idols" towards "myself as idol". Teigen et al. (2000) suggested that the choice of idols does not happen in a social vacuum. Idols are – according to the authors – a reflection of the social and historical context and therefore can change accordingly in response to what adolescents are exposed to in schools, books, television, their families and the wider societal context. Teigen et al.'s (2000) conclusion indicates that the choice of idols is strongly interlinked to the social and historical context in which the adolescent lives.

The present paper will report on two studies which introduce the perspective of Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) to shed light on the understanding of the relationship between the choice of idols and the social context. Based on SIT the present study proposes the existence of a functional relationship between the choice of idols and social identity management strategies that is moderated by the status position of the adolescent's group s/he belongs to. The consideration of the status position of an adolescent who chooses an idol offers the opportunity to extend our understanding of the question "how do idols change" – as was found by Teigen et al. (2000) who showed the shift from national-historical figures towards contemporary figures and towards myself as idol - since it is possible to attribute those shifts to changes in the status relations within a concrete social and historical context.

The Study of Idols

The study of idols has a long history. The first study on idols was conducted by Darrah in 1898 who asked of 1440 school children what person whom they had ever heard of or read about they would like to be like (Teigen et al., 2000). This pioneer study marked out the lines on which all subsequent studies have been conducted (Teigen et al., 2000). Subsequent studies were conducted by Barnes (1900) who asked the same question of 2100 8-13 year olds in London and New Jersey; Dodd (1900) conducted a study with 700 children in England; Young (1901) conducted a study on 2500 Scottish children and Friedrich (1901) published the first German study (see Teigen et al., 2000). By the time Chambers (1903) published his study on the idols of 2500 6-16 year olds in Pennsylvania, it appeared as though the topic had been so thoroughly researched that he began his publication with an apology as to why this type of research was still being conducted (Teigen et al., 2000, p. 6). His plea was heeded and studies

continued throughout the world. New studies were conducted in the USA in 1907 and 1911; in Germany in 1912; in Sweden in 1913; Norway in 1916 and Denmark in 1916 (Teigen et al., 2000). The study in Norway was conducted by Reymert (1916) who posed the question "Which person would you most like to be like and why?" to 800 Norwegian teacher college students. His answers were in line with the developmental trends of that time where 95% of the men and 68% of the women named public figures with famous writers as the preferred category (Teigen et al., 2000). Public figures most often named in the above mentioned studies were George Washington in the USA; General Nelson, Queen Victoria and Florence Nightingale in England; Tordenskjold, the war hero from the 1700s, in Norway (see Teigen et al., 2000). All studies showed gender differences with a high percentage of girls choosing idols of the opposite gender followed by personal acquaintances (Teigen et al., 2000).

A new type of idol study was introduced by Havighurst (1946) where he changed the traditional question about a concrete idol into a page written description about a person they would most like to be like - real or imagined (Teigen et al., 2000, p.7). The outcome revealed that the traditional category of public figures had changed to heroes and glamorous adults such as movie stars and athletes (see Teigen et al., 2000). The Havighurst study was replicated by MacDonald in 1955 and Wheeler in 1961 which revealed that the category of historical heroes as choice of idol was almost extinct, while idols of the "glamorous sort" appeared to have increased (Teigen et al., 2000, p. 7).

The trend towards choice of glamorous figures as idol accelerated with the advent of television. In 1962 Campbell surveyed 12 and 15 year olds in Australia before the introduction of

television and then 3 years after the introduction of television. The results of this study showed that glamorous role models increased from 5 to 15% (Teigen et al., 2000). Idols of the glamorous sort appeared to have increased their appeal and availability with the advent of television.

A new trend in the results of idol studies was found in studies conducted in the second half of the 20th century. Research conducted by Simmons and Wade (1985) revealed that 20% wanted to be like themselves. Myself answers were evident in earlier research but infrequently. Bull (1969, in Teigen et al., 2000, p. 8) had already discovered this trend when 40% of his sample of English 15 to 17 year old respondents preferred to be themselves. Teigen et al. (2000) attributed this trend to the humanistic movement in the 1960s with the focus on self–acceptance.

In these later studies, relevant attributes of the idols were also recorded and trends were also identified as to what attributes were considered important by the respondents. Teigen et al.'s (2000) meta-analysis revealed that there was a preference for moral qualities, with "honesty" being the most frequent single trait. Social qualities such as outgoing, entertaining, helpfulness, consideration and friendliness were also mentioned as were other traits more characteristic of high achievers (Teigen et al., 2000, p. 13). Qualities related to achievement were emphasised by up to 15% of the boys and only 5% of the girls. Girls emphasised social characteristics more and boys preferred characteristics related to performance (Teigen et al., 2000, p.13).

In the 1990s, evidence for predictions in the change in types of idol chosen became more interesting with the effects of TV and media figures. Teigen et al. (2000) replicated Reymert's (1916) study asking the original question 'Who would you most like to be like?' to a large sample of Norwegian 16-17 year olds and a smaller sample of Norwegian 13-14 year olds. Teigen et al. (2000) used the initial coding system of Reymert (1916) with the original categories of *public figures, personal acquaintances, religious figures* and *others*. Teigen et al. (2000) added the categories of *myself, nobody* and *don't know*. The results showed that boys preferred public figures (48.6%) and girls preferred personal acquaintances (32.7%). The most frequent names for public characters chosen by boys included action movie figures such as Schwarzenegger, van Damme and Rambo; sports stars such as Eric Cantona were chosen as well as a surprising choice of Albert Einstein (26 times). In total, 45% of the boys chose public figures; 21% chose actors and 17% chose pop stars (Teigen et al., 2000, p. 15). Girls chose actresses such as Sharon Stone and models such as Cindy Crawford and Claudia Schiffer. In total, actresses and models comprised about 25% of the girls' answers in the category of public figures followed by sports stars (19%) and pop stars (13%). Boys preferred same sex models while 30% of girls' idols were of the opposite sex. In the personal acquaintance category, boys mentioned their fathers (n=52), a friend (n=16) or a brother (n=15) most frequently; girls most frequently chose their mother (n=90) or a female friend (n=74) followed by their father (n=49), sister (n=23) and brother (n=18).

Teigen et al. (2000) focused on the media figures and myself responses that were rare responses in the turn of the century research. Teigen et al. (2000) view the responses as polar opposites as a myself response implies a rejection of external models as media figures are

admired for virtually unattainable external qualities like looks and fame. Teigen et al. (2000) also asked the groups to list personal characteristics of human qualities that they value most highly. It was predicted by the authors that these two ways of asking about idols would not lead to the same result and that adolescent's preoccupation with fame, if their choice was a media idol, should be compared with their views of "ideal traits". Teigen et al.'s (2000) research revealed that adolescent's choice of ideal traits is different and more in line with traditional values than suggested by their fascination with media figures.

The comparison of responses between Norwegian adolescents at the beginning of the 20th century and adolescents at the end of the 20th century revealed some similar trends and different results. The striking differences were that the kind of public figures selected in the 1994 studies were sports heroes, movie stars and pop artists compared to historical figures, poets and writers in the early 1900s. The other striking difference is that the myself and nobody answers that were almost unheard of in the early 1900s increased substantially at the end of the 20th century. These results were confirmed by unpublished research undertaken by Wichstrom in 1996 with 12 000 Norwegian youths who noted that common answers were 'myself', 'nobody special' or 'I have no idols' (see Teigen et al., 2000, p. 15). Based on their two studies and the results of the meta-analysis of previous studies, Teigen et al. (2000, p. 23) conclude that "idols are cultural products: childrens' idols are clearly a reflection of their social and historical context and can, accordingly, be expected to change in response to what they are exposed to, in schools, in books, on television, in their families and inside their peer groups".

The conclusion made by Teigen et al. (2000) that the choice of idols is determined by the social context, in general, and by changes of the social context, in particular, will be tested in the present study. Social Identity Theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) represents a useful perspective for conceptualising the link between choice of idols and social context as it provides a theoretical framework of social change. Based on SIT, the present study proposes the existence of a functional relationship between the choice of idols and social identity management strategies that is moderated by the status position of the adolescent's group s/he belongs to.

The Choice of Idols and Social Identity Management Strategies

SIT states that people's self concept consists of personal and social identities. Social identity is gained by group membership. One of the basic assumptions of SIT is that people strive for positive social identity. Positive social identity is gained by positive distinctiveness as a result of intergroup comparison on a relevant comparison dimension. Under the condition that positive distinctiveness cannot be reached or positive distinctiveness is perceived as threatened, SIT assumes that people apply identity management strategies to regain or maintain positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) postulates different classes of social identity management strategies: strategies by which the individual's position is changed whilst the status relation between the two groups remains unchanged (i.e. *social mobility*); strategies by which the cognitive representations about the intergroup situation are primarily changed (i.e. *creativity strategies*) and strategies that seek to change the status relations (i.e. *social/realistic*

competition). The choice of identity management strategy is defined as a function of the interaction among status position, beliefs about the nature of group boundaries, the intensity of ingroup identification and the collective beliefs about the social system (Turner, 1999, p. 9). This functional interaction has been investigated and specified for both dominant and non-dominant groups in numerous experimental studies (for an overview see Ellemers, 2002) and field studies (Ellemers & Bos, 1998; Niens, Cairns, Finchilescu, Foster & Tredoux, 2003, Campbell, 1995a, 1995b, Blanz, Mummendey, Mielke & Klink, 1996; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink & Mielke, 1999; Mummendey, Klink, Mielke, Wenzel & Blanz, 1999, Dumont & Van Lill, 2009).

SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p.) predicts and empirical evidence confirms that social mobility is likely to be applied by members of a non-dominant group under the condition that intergroup boundaries are perceived as permeable except when this strategy is subjectively impossible (e.g. when individuals are highly committed to their group, see Ellemers, Spears & Doojse, 1997). Creativity strategies are assumed to be the choice of members of the dominant and non-dominant groups under the condition that the intergroup relations are perceived as *secure* (i.e. intergroup differences are perceived as stable and/or legitimate), while competition is likely to occur under the condition that the intergroup relations are perceived as *insecure* (i.e. intergroup differences are perceived as instable and/or illegitimate, see Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Legitimacy refers to intergroup differences (e.g. group status) as having been achieved by fair means, while stability refers to the perception of possible future changes of the ingroup's status in comparison to another group and perception of the group status as stable means that any future change in the group's position is considered unlikely (Niens & Cairns, 2003).

We argue that choice of idol can be understood as standing in a *functional relationship* with these identity management strategies. An idol that stands in a functional relationship with social mobility would be an idol that represents somebody from the outgroup – since social mobility, which means that the individual moves psychologically from ingroup to outgroup, increases outgroup identification (Ellemers, Spears & Doojse, 1997). An idol that stands in a functional relationship with creativity strategies would be an idol that represents somebody who is prototypical for the ingroup – since creativity strategies result in changes in the cognitive representations of the status relations. An idol that stands in a functional relationship with social competition would be an idol that represents somebody who is seen to be able to change the actual status relations.

If the outlined assumptions about the functional relationship between the choice of idols and identity management strategies are inferred to the classification of idols as suggested by Teigen et al. (2000), one could hypothesise that under the condition that intergroup boundaries are perceived as permeable, it is likely that idols such as glamorous figures and sports stars are chosen that are representative of the outgroup. It can be further predicted that glamorous figures and sports stars from the outgroup are more likely to be chosen by members of the non-dominant group than members of the dominant group. Under the condition that group boundaries are perceived as impermeable and that status relations are perceived as stable and legitimate (i.e. *secure*), it is likely that idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances are chosen that rather represent prototypes from the ingroup. It can be further assumed that under the outlined conditions, this choice is likely for both

members of the non-dominant and dominant group. Under the condition that the status relations are perceived as unstable and illegitimate (i.e. *insecure*), it is likely that idols such as political figures are chosen that are assumed to contribute to change (i.e. members of the non-dominant group) or to maintain (i.e. members of the dominant group) the actual intergroup relations.

South Africa offers a societal context in which the functional relationship between idols and identity management strategies and its shift can be studied – since the intergroup relations between the former dominant (white South Africans) and non-dominant groups (black South Africans) has been changing since 1994. Two studies were conducted to test the proposed functional relationship between idols and identity management strategies. The first study conducted in 2007 aimed at testing the shift in the choice of idols between black and white adolescents of the 1980s (now adults) and current black and white adolescents. The second study conducted in 2008 aimed at replicating the results of current adolescents' idols in order to validate the findings of the first study.

STUDY 1

The first study aimed to test the following general hypotheses: under the condition that status relations are perceived as flexible (permeable intergroup boundaries), it is likely that idols such as glamorous figures and sports stars are chosen that are representative of the outgroup (H1). Under the condition that status relations are perceived as stable and legitimate (i.e. secure), it is likely that idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances are chosen that rather represent prototypes from the ingroup (H2). Under the

condition that status relations are perceived as unstable and illegitimate (i.e. insecure), it is likely that idols such as political figures are chosen that are assumed to contribute to change the actual status relations (H3).

Sample

Current adolescent participants were from Cambridge High School, a middle–class mixed race school (white sample) and Nkwenkwezi High School, a lower income single-race school (black sample) all based in East London, South Africa. Altogether 176 participants - 108 white and 68 black participants submitted completed questionnaires. The average age of the white participants was 15 years (with a range from 14 – 19). The white sample consisted of 65 females and 43 males. The average age of black participants was 15.4 years (with a range from 14-16). The black sample consisted of 33 females and 35 males.

Current adult participants were sourced using snowball sampling technique. Questionnaires were distributed to adults by the researcher and adult participants who in turn submitted them to people they knew. Altogether 64 white and 60 black adults completed questionnaires. The average age of the white adults was 42.6 years (with a range from 25-60). The white sample consisted of 47 females and 17 males. The average age of the black adults was 42.3 years (with a range from 39-48). The black sample consisted of 16 females and 44 males.

Procedure

The researcher contacted the headmaster of both schools in order to obtain permission to conduct the research at the schools after explaining what the research intended to study. The questionnaire to current adolescents was distributed by research assistants at Cambridge High School and Nkwenkwezi High School in East London during the June examinations in 2007 while the adolescents were seated in large lecture halls. The instruction given was that the study aimed to investigate idols of adolescents and that the participants were to complete the questionnaires that were handed out to them. Participation was voluntary and no incentive was given.

The questionnaires to adults were distributed by the researcher (white female) and a black colleague (male) using the snowball technique to obtain other adults who would complete the questionnaire. Gonubie Primary School, Cambridge High School and Inkwenkwezi High School teachers formed part of the response group. Friends of these teachers and acquaintances of the researchers also completed questionnaires.

Instruments

Two questionnaires were developed – one for the group of adults and one for the group of adolescents (see Appendix A). The questionnaires consisted of two parts. In part one the adult participants were asked "Who did you most want to be like when you were a teenager in the 1980s" and adolescent participants were asked "Who do you most want to be like?".

In the second part of the questionnaire, adult and adolescent participants were provided with the Intergroup Perception Ladder representing an adaptation of Cantril's Self-Anchoring Striving Scale (Finchilescu & de la Rey, 1991). Participants were presented with a drawing of a ladder with 12 rungs (labelled from 0 to 11) and asked to imagine that this ladder represents economic status in South Africa. The top step represents the best economic status one could imagine while the bottom step represents the worst. The task of the participants was to indicate their opinion about which step their ingroup and the respective comparison group stood on in the past (25 years ago); where they stand today; where they would stand in the future (in 15 years time) and where they should stand ideally. This was used to determine how black and white participants perceive the status relations between white and black South Africans.

The idols were assigned by two raters using an adaptation of Teigen et al.'s (2000) classification system of idols: myself, parents, family, personal acquaintances, religious figures, political figures, sports stars, pop stars and nobody. The named idols were also analysed in terms of representativeness of the ingroup or outgroup. The rating procedure was organized as follow: the two raters (a white and black South African) assigned the idols independently to the classification system by consulting a number of sources (e.g. internet, confirming idols with adolescents, and general knowledge of idols via the media). These sources provided the justification for the assignment of the idols to the idol classification system as well as to the respective groups (white or black). An interrater reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was performed to determine consistency between the two raters. The interrater reliability for the raters was found to be *Kappa* = .86 ($p < .001$). The two raters discussed each "ambiguous" case until agreement was reached.

Results

<u>Preliminary Analysis</u>

Economic status

Figure 1 and 2 depict the perceptions of white and black adult participants indicating how their group's economic status changed over time from the past to the future.
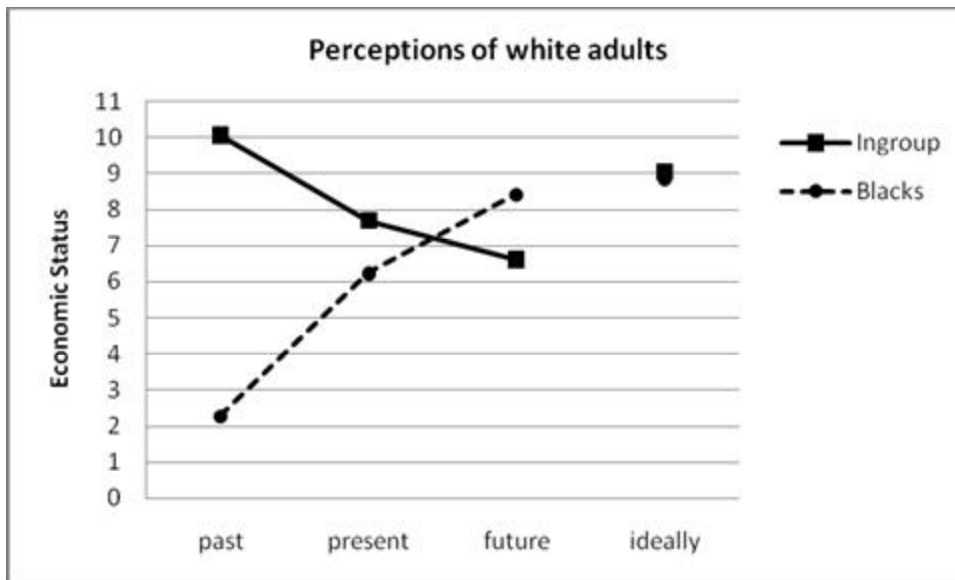

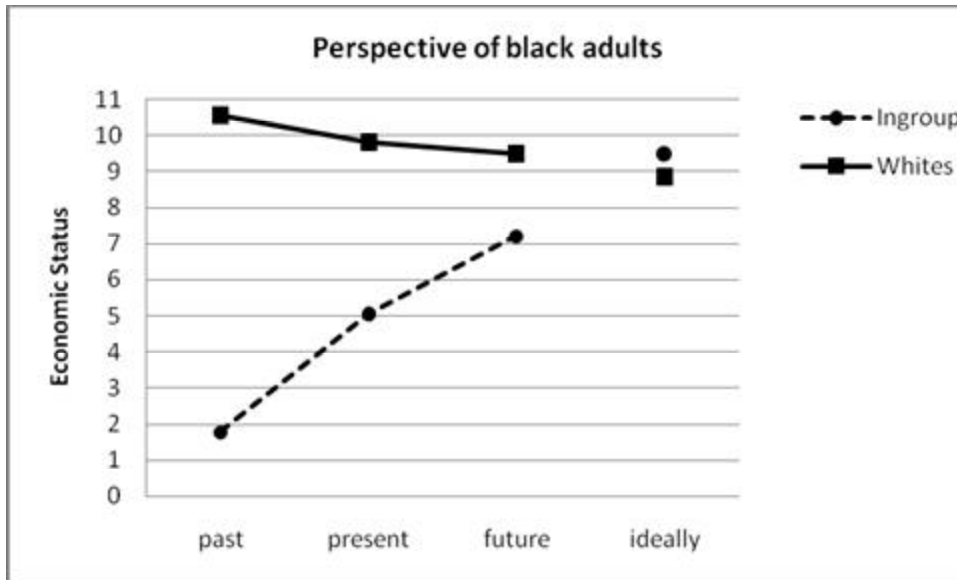Figure 1: Perception of white adult participants economic status change

Figure 2: Perception of black adult participants economic status change

The results of a paired sample t-test revealed that white adult participants perceive their ingroup's economic status as dominant in the past (M=10.06, SD=1.15) relative to black people (M=2.28, SD=1.87), $t(63) = 26.84$, $p < .001$, and that black adult participants perceive whites' economic status as dominant in the past (M=10.55, SD=1.41) relative to the black people as ingroup (M=1.78, SD=1.82), $t(59) = -30.91$, $p < .001$. At the present, white adult participants perceive their ingroup's economic status as dominant (M=7.69, SD=1.93) relative to black people (M=6.24, SD=2.45), $t(62) = 3.43$, $p < .01$, and black adult participants perceive white people as dominant (M=9.80, SD=1.62) relative to black people (ingroup) (M=5.06, SD=2.65), $t(59) = -10.93$, $p < .001$. The results indicate that both groups perceive a decrease in the differences although in different degrees.

The economic status relations of the future are perceived by white adult participants that the ingroup will represent the non-dominant group (M=6.62, SD=2.63) relative to black people (M=8.42, SD=2.55), $t(65) = -4.73$, $p < .001$. This perception is not shared at all by black adult

participants who perceive the outgroup (white people) as still dominant in the future (M=9.48, SD=1.73), relative to black people as ingroup (M=7.21, SD=2.64), $t(59) = -5.173$, p < .001. The participants were also asked to indicate how the status relations should be ideally between white and black South Africans. Both white adult participants (ingroup: M=9.04, SD=1.82, outgroup: M=8.84, SD=2.13, $t(63) = 1.10$, p >.05) and black adult participants (ingroup: M=9.48, SD=1.93, outgroup: M=8.83, SD=2.61, $t(59) = 1.577$, p >.05) indicate that the economic status relations should be equal.

Figure 3 and 4 show the results of status relations between black and white South Africans as perceived by adolescents. White adolescent participants perceive their ingroup's economic status as dominant in the past (M=9.51, SD=2.06) relative to black people (M=3.32, SD=2.46), $t(95) = 17.68$, p <.001, and black adolescent participants perceive whites' economic status as dominant in the past (M=9.67, SD=1.90) relative to black people as ingroup (M=5.60, SD=3.27), $t(64) = -8.13$, p < .001. At present, white adolescent participants perceive their ingroup's economic status as non-dominant (M=6.66, SD=2.23) relative to black people (M=7.69, SD=2.35), $t(95) = -2.91$, p <.01, and black adolescent participants perceive white people as dominant (M=9.98, SD=1.55) relative to black people (ingroup) (M=9.23, SD=2.44), $t(54) = -2.18$, p < .05. White adolescent participants perceive the future economic status of the ingroup as non-dominant (M=6.37, SD=3.00) relative to black people (M=9.13, SD=2.00), $t(95) = -6.63$, p < .001. This perception is not shared by black adolescent participants since they perceive the outgroup (white people) (M=9.43, SD=2.01) as equal to black people as ingroup (M=9.49, SD=2.06), $t(64) = .085$, p > .05. Again, the participants were asked to indicate how the status relations should be ideally between white and black people in South

Africa. White adolescent participants indicate that the ingroup (M=7.97, SD=2.46) and black people (M=8.28, SD=2.17) should have equal economic status, $t(95) = -1.21$, $p > .05$, while black participants indicate that their ingroup should ideally be the dominant group (M=10.03, SD=1.43) relative to white people (M=8.53, SD=3.21), $t(64) = 3.46$, $p < .01$.
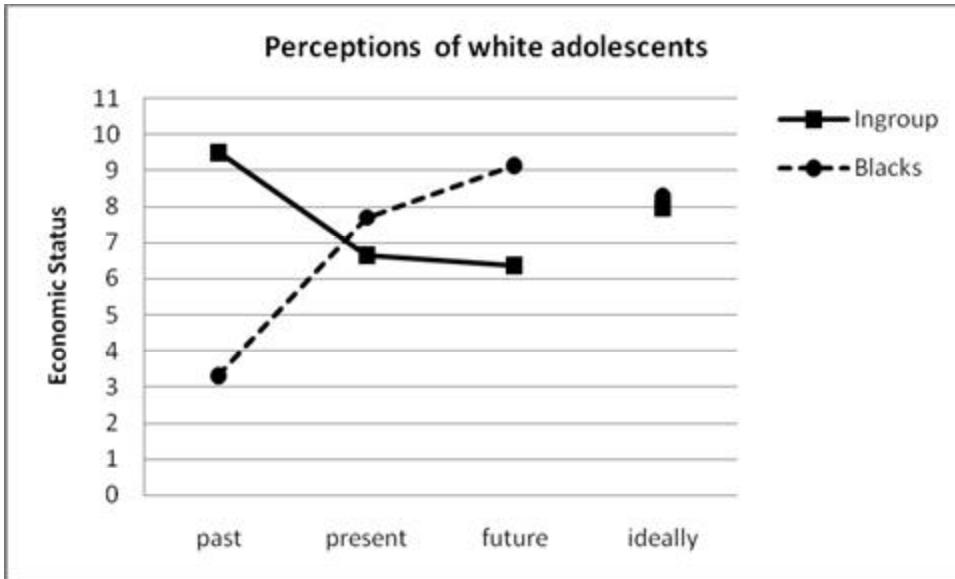

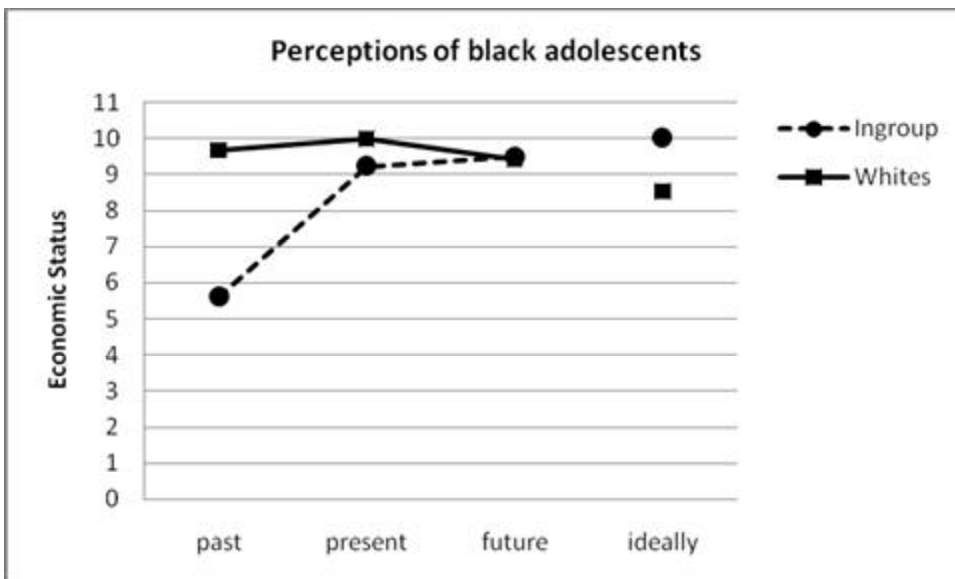Figure 3: White 2007 adolescent perceived status relations

Figure 4: Black 2007 adolescent perceived status relations

The results indicate that adults and adolescents differ in their perspectives on the economic status relations between white and black South Africans. Black adult participants perceive the change in the intergroup relations as an increase of their status position and a slight decrease in the status positions of white people. However, both black and white adult participants perceive white people as dominant and black people as non-dominant in the past and at present. In respect to the future, white and black adult participants have different anticipations. White adult participants perceive that black people will be the dominant group, while black adult participants perceive that white people maintain their dominant status position. Both groups indicate that ideal status relations should be of equality.

Black and white adolescent participants perceive the past status relations of black and white South Africans as that of white dominance and black non-dominance. At present, white adolescent participants perceive their ingroup (white people) as non-dominant and black people as dominant. This shift in the status relations is not perceived by black adolescent participants since they perceive the ingroup (black people) as non-dominant and white people (outgroup) as dominant at present. The two groups also differ in their anticipations in respect to future status relations between black and white South Africans and in respect to ideal status relations. White adolescent participants anticipate that black people will be the dominant group in the future and they desire that both groups should be equal (ideal status relations); while black adolescent participants anticipate that status differences will disappear in the future and ideal status differences would be the ingroup representing the dominant group.

By using the outlined results of two white samples, one could state that since the Apartheid system ensured the dominant status position for white people, the majority of past white adolescents perceived the status relations between black and white people as *secure*. According to our theoretical framework it was predicted that past white adolescents chose idols that represent prototypes for their group (H2). Present white adolescents who perceive their group as non-dominant economically and who perceive that ideally the intergroup relations should be equal, are assumed to perceive *insecure* status relations. In accordance with the theoretical framework applied in the present study, we assumed that white adolescent participants are likely to choose political figures that contribute reaching status equality (H3).

The preliminary analysis for black adult participants indicated that the status relations between white and black South Africans was perceived as that of white dominance and black non-dominance. However, the history of South Africa – in particular the anti-apartheid struggle – suggests that the majority of black adult participants perceived the non-dominant status position of their ingroup as *insecure* in the past. According to the theoretical framework in this study, it was predicted for black adult participants that they were more likely to choose idols such as political figures that were assumed to contribute to change the status relations at the time (H3). Black adolescent participants indicated that – although the differences between white and black people decreased – ingroup people (black South Africans) are still non-dominant economically relative to the outgroup (white South Africans). Additionally, black adolescent participants indicated that their group should ideally be the dominant group. Accordingly, the hypothesis tested for the black adolescent participants stated that they are more likely to choose idols such as political figures that are assumed to contribute to change

the status relations in order to reach the ideal status difference with the ingroup as dominant group (H3).

Main Analysis

Choice of idols

Table 1 summarises the results of idols for white adult and adolescent participants. Significant differences between white adult and adolescent participants (according to adjusted residuals) were found in respect of parents, sports stars and pop stars as idols. There were two significant changes in the choice of idols for the group of current adolescents who name parents and sports stars significantly more often than the adults did. The third change in choice of idol refers to the pop stars which were significantly more often named by adult participants than by adolescent participants.

Table 1: Percentages of idols chosen by white participants

Category of idol	White Sample		
	Adult (rank)	Adolescent (rank)	Adjusted Residuals
Myself	5.6	11.7 (4)	ns
Parents	11.1 (2)	34 (1)	sig.
Family	11.1 (2)	10.7 (5)	ns
Personal Acquaintances	11.1 (2)	4.9	ns
Religious Figures	0	0	
Political Figures	3.7	1.9	ns
Sports Stars	5.6	17.5 (3)	sig.
Pop stars	46.3 (1)	19.4 (2)	sig.
	χ^2 (7) = 29.305, $p < .001$		

Frequently named idols for adults were Princess Diana (6 times), Suzi Quatro (2), "my mother" (3), "my father" (2) and "myself" (3), while frequently named idols for adolescents were Natalie Du Toit (2), Nelson Mandela (2), "my mother" (19), "my father" (14) and "myself" (12). Idols were further classified as representative of either the ingroup or the outgroup. As the results in Table 2 show, white adult and adolescent participants predominantly chose idols that were/are representative of the ingroup, which indicates that group boundaries were and are not perceived as permeable and consequently, social mobility as identity management strategy was and is not applied (H1).

Table 2: Ingroup / outgroup idol representation for white participants in percentages

	Idols group	
	White (ingroup)	Black (outgroup)
Adolescents	92	8
Adults	95.7	4.3
	$?^2(1) = .707, p > .05$	

The hypothesis (H2), which stated that under the condition that status relations are perceived as stable and legitimate (*secure*), it is likely that idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances are chosen that rather represent prototypes from the ingroup, was confirmed for the group of white adolescents of the past (adult participants). The hypothesis which was assumed for white adolescent participants and which stated, that under the condition that status relations are perceived as unstable and illegitimate (*insecure*), it is likely that idols such as political figures are chosen that are assumed to contribute to change the actual status relations could not be confirmed (H3).

The idols chosen by black adult participants and black adolescent participants are depicted in Table 3. Significant differences between black adult and adolescent participants were found in respect of political figures, sports stars and pop stars as idol. There were two significant changes in the choice of idols for the group of black adolescent participants who name sports stars and pop stars significantly more often than the adults did. The third change in the choice of idol was revealed in adults naming political figures significantly more often than current adolescent.

Table 3: Percentages of idols chosen by black participants

Category of idol	Black		
	Adult (rank)	Adolescent (rank)	Adjusted Residuals
Myself	1.7	0	ns
Parents	15	9	ns
Family	6.7	3	ns
Personal Acquaintances	18.3 (2)	10.4 (3)	ns
Religious Figures	5	0	ns
Political Figures	46.7 (1)	10.4 (3)	sig.
Sports Stars	3.3	17.9 (2)	sig.
Pop stars	3.3	49.3 (1)	sig.
	$X^2 (7) = 53.13, p < .001$		

Idols frequently mentioned by adults were Allan Boesak (2), Chris Hani (3), Nelson Mandela (2), Winnie Mandela (3), Steve Biko (4), Steve Tshwete (2), Thabo Mbeki (2), "my mother" (5) and "my father" (3), while idols frequently mentioned by adolescents were Beyonce (2), David Beckham (2), Eminem (2), Kabelo (2), Makhaya Ntini (2), Mandoza (2), Rebecca Molope (3), Zola (5), Thabo Mbeki (2), "my mother" (4) and "my father" (2).

The classification of idols as representative of either the ingroup or the outgroup revealed the following results (see Table 4): black adult and adolescent participants predominantly chose idols that were/are representative of the ingroup. However, according to the adjusted residuals, black adolescent participants name idols from the outgroup significantly more often than adult participants. This result suggests that adolescents perceive permeability of group boundaries between black and white South Africans relative to adults, who did not perceive permeability at all (H1). However, the number of participants who chose outgroup idols and consequently, the identity management strategy social mobility is relatively small.

Table 4: Ingroup / outgroup idol representation for black participants in percentages

	Idols group	
	Black (ingroup)	White (outgroup)
Adolescents	85.1	14.9
Adults	100	0
	X^2 (1) = 9.72, $p <. 002$	

The hypothesis for black adult participants, which stated that under the condition that status relations are perceived as insecure it is likely that idols such as political figures are chosen who are able to contribute to the change the intergroup relations, was confirmed (H3). The The

The hypothesis for black adult participants, which stated that under the condition that status relations are perceived as insecure it is likely that idols such as political figures are chosen who are able to contribute to the change the intergroup relations, was confirmed (H3). The hypothesis for the group of black adolescents, which stated that they are more likely to choose idols such as political figures that are assumed to contribute to changes in the status relations in order to reach the ideal status difference with the ingroup as dominant group, was only partially confirmed (H3).

Discussion

The hypotheses for the first study stated that for the 1980s white adolescents, status relations between black and white groups were perceived as secure and therefore idols such as glamorous figures were chosen that represent prototypes from the ingroup (H2). This hypothesis was confirmed. For the current white adolescents, it was hypothesised that status relations between black and white groups were perceived as insecure and therefore idols such as political figures were chosen that were assumed to contribute to change the actual status relations (H3). This hypothesis was not confirmed. White adolescents predominantly chose their parents and family members as their idols.

The hypotheses for black adults predicted that political figures will be predominantly mentioned as their idols (H3). This hypothesis was confirmed in the present study. It was further hypothesized that present day black adolescents who perceive their group as non-dominant relative to white people but express that their group should be the dominant group ideally will choose political figures as their idols (H3). However, the hypothesis for the black

adolescent participants was only partially confirmed. The comparison of black adults and adolescents indicated that the main shift in idols refers to the shift from political figures to glamorous figures. Both black and white adolescents name political idols but to different degrees.

The results of the first study support the assumption that the choice of idols for the adult samples but not for the adolescent samples. Different explanations can be given for the results and are discussed separately for white and black adolescents. The first possible explanation for the fact that white adolescent participants do not predominantly choose political figures as idols as predicted, is one of rather a speculative nature. One could state that political figures are simply not available in current South Africa that could represent idols for this group. The second explanation argues from Social Identity Theory. From a SIT perspective, one could explain this result by stating that present white adolescents perceived the current intergroup relations between black and white South Africans as secure rather than insecure as assumed. Since white adolescent participants indicated that they perceived themselves as the non-dominant group economically, which ideally should not exist, it was concluded that they perceive the intergroup relations as *insecure*. This conclusion was informed by Tajfel's (1981) reasoning that "... there is little doubt that an unstable system of social divisions between groups is more likely to be perceived as illegitimate than a stable one; and that conversely a system perceived as illegitimate will contain the seeds of instability" (p. 250). The second aspect of Tajfel's statement particularly informed our conclusion that present white adolescents perceive intergroup relations as insecure which determined the assumptions about their choice of idols. However, one could argue that status differences perceived as "illegitimate will

contain the seeds of instability" only if changes in the intergroup relations are perceived as possible to happen in one's life time. Taking this reasoning into consideration, two different future time points were included in the second study. Given the condition that white adolescents perceive their ingroup as non-dominant not only in 15 years time but also in 50 years time, it would be questionable to conclude that intergroup relations are perceived as insecure by this group.

The result that black adolescent participants do not predominantly name political figures as idols as predicted, might have been caused by the fact that black adolescents might not see the necessity to choose political idols who contribute to change the actual status relations between black and white South Africans since economic empowerment of black people (BEE, reference) is on the agenda of the current South African government which is governed by the ANC. One could assume that adolescents who believe that their ingroup is controlling the political sphere of society indicates that they trust future developments and that due to political dominance, they perceive the ideal intergroup relations as secure. Political status as additional measurement was therefore added into study 2 to determine whether political dominance rather than economic dominance determines the perception of intergroup relations and thereby the choice of idol.

STUDY 2

The second study using a repeated cross-sectional design aimed to replicate the results of the first study by specifying the perceptions of the intergroup relations in terms of political group status as an additional measure. The general hypotheses tested in the second study, as in the first, stated that under the condition that status relations are perceived as flexible (permeable intergroup boundaries), it is likely that idols such as glamorous figures and sports stars are chosen that are representative of the outgroup (H1); under the condition that status relations are perceived as stable and legitimate (i.e. secure), it is likely that idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances are chosen that rather represent prototypes from the ingroup (H2); under the condition that status relations are perceived as unstable and illegitimate (i.e. insecure), it is likely that idols such as political figures are chosen that are assumed to contribute to change the actual status relations (H3).

Sample

As in study 1, adolescent participants were from Cambridge High School, a middle–class mixed race group school (white sample) and Nkwenkwezi High School (black sample), a lower income school for black adolescents. Altogether 227 participants - 116 black students and 111 white students submitted completed questionnaires. The average age of the white participants was 15.4 years (with a range from 13-20) and the average age of black participants 15 years (ranging from 13 to 25). One hundred and twelve female, 175 males and 10 with gender not indicated participated in the survey.

Procedure

The procedure of the second study was the same as in the first study, except that the study was conducted one year later (June 2008) with different participants (repeated cross-sectional design).

Instruments

The questionnaire used in the present study was identical to the questionnaire used for adolescents in the 2007 study, except that future economic status relations were specified by distinguishing between "in 15 years time" and "in 50 years time" and that political status relations was additionally assessed (see Appendix B). The perceived political status relations between black and white adolescents in South Africa were assessed using the intergroup perception ladder with 12 rungs (labelled from 0 to 11). The top step (11) represented the most *political power* one could imagine while the bottom (0) step represented the least *political power*. There were five categories: 25 years ago, today, in 15 years time, in 50 years time and ideally.

The assignments of the idols to the adjusted classification system proposed by Teigen et al. (2000) were organized in the very same manner as in the first study. The interrater reliability for the raters in the second study was found to be *Kappa* = .81 ($p < .001$). As in study 1, the two raters discussed each "ambiguous" case until agreement was reached.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Economic status

Figure 5 and 6 summarise the perception of white and black participants indicating how their group's economic status changed over time from the past to the future. White adolescent participants perceive their ingroup's economic status as dominant in the past (M=9.34, SD=1.89) relative to black people (M=3.60, SD=2.38), $t(102) = 16.94$, $p < .001$. Black adolescent participants also perceive whites' economic status as dominant in the past (M=9.02, SD=3.99) relative to the black people as ingroup (M=5.59, SD=4.71), $t(109) = -4.68$, $p < .001$. At present, white adolescent participants perceive their ingroup's economic status as non-dominant (M=5.77, SD=2.38) relative to black people (M=8.06, SD=2.19), $t(103) = -6.68$, $p < .001$. Black adolescent participants perceive their ingroup (M=8.02, SD=4.95) relative to white people (M=6.60, SD=5.07) as slightly higher in status although the difference only approaches statistical significance, $t(110) = 1.77$, $p = .083$.
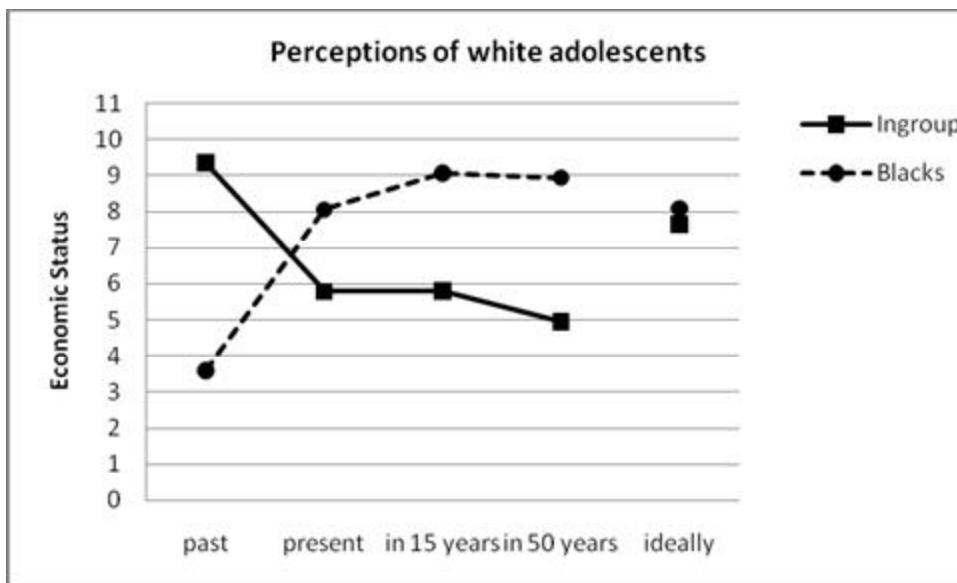
Figure 5: White 2008 adolescents perceived economic status relations
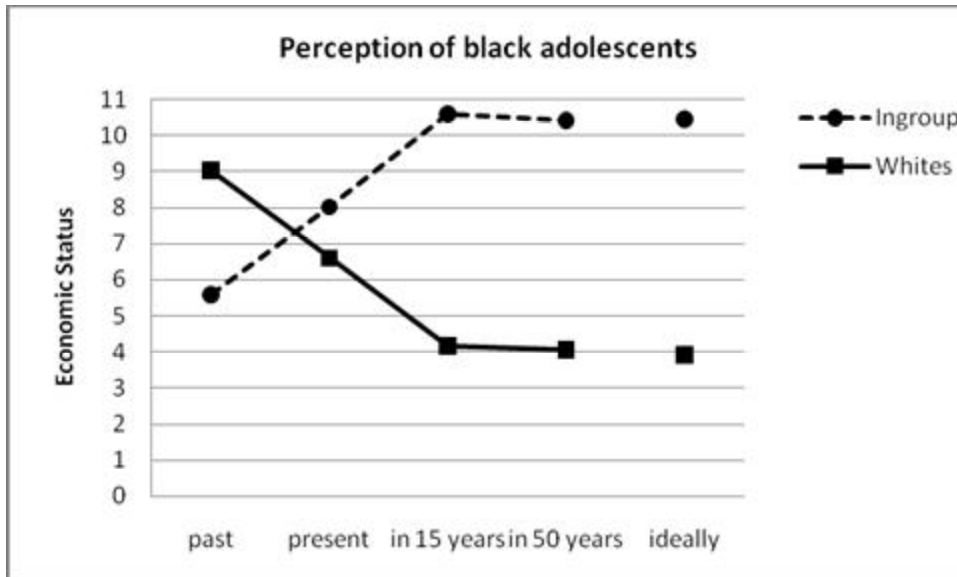
Figure 6: Black 2008 adolescents perceived economic status relations

The economic status relations in 15 years time is perceived by white participants that the ingroup represents the non-dominant group (M=5.78, SD=2.85) relative to black people (M=9.07, SD=2.16), $t(103) = -8.79$, $p < .001$. This perception is shared by black participants who perceive the outgroup (white people) as non-dominant in 15 years time (M=4.17, SD=4.86), relative to the black people as ingroup (M=10.59, SD=1.33), $t(112) = 12.40$, $p < .001$. The economic status relations in 50 years time is perceived by white participants that the ingroup would represent the non-dominant group (M=4.93, SD=3.70) relative to black people (M=8.93, SD=2.80), $t(103) = -8.19$, $p < .001$. This perception is again shared by black participants who perceive the outgroup (white people) as non-dominant in 50 years time (M=4.07, SD=4.78), relative to the black people as ingroup (M=10.41, SD=1.80), $t(111) = 11.71$, $p < .001$.

The participants were also asked to indicate how the status relations should be ideally between white and black people in South Africa. White participants indicate that the ingroup (M=7.63, SD=2.67) and black people (M=8.09, SD=2.60) should have an almost equal economical status, $t(102) = -1.52$, $p > .05$, unlike black participants who perceive a dominant ingroup status (M=10.44, SD=1.75) relative to white people as outgroup (M=3.92, SD=4.81), $t(110) = 11.89$, $p < .001$.

Political status

Figures 7 and 8 depict the perception of white and black participants indicating how their political status has changed from the past, through today, the future and ideally. White adolescent participants perceive their ingroup's political status as dominant in the past (M=9.46, SD=2.05) relative to black people (M=3.32, SD=2.47), $t(106) = 16.59$, $p < .001$, and black adolescent participants perceive the outgroup's economic status as dominant in the past (M=10.00, SD=3.03) relative to the black people as ingroup (M=4.77, SD=4.26), $t(112) = -8.86$, $p < .001$. At the present, white adolescent participants perceive their ingroup's political status as non-dominant (M=4.15, SD=2.53) relative to black people (M=9.27, SD=2.00), $t(106) = -14.86$, $p < .001$, and black adolescent participants perceive white people as non-dominant (M=6.36, SD=4.91) relative to black people (ingroup) (M=7.83, SD=4.45), although the difference only approaches statistical significance $t(113) = 1.83$, $p = .071$. The political status relations in 15 years time is perceived by white participants that the ingroup represents the non-dominant group (M=4.51, SD=3.47) relative to black people (M=9.58, SD=2.01), $t(105) = -11.42$, $p < .001$. This perception is shared by black participants who perceive the outgroup (white people) as non-dominant in 15 years time (M=3.71, SD=4.53), relative to the black

people as ingroup (M=10.54, SD=1.69), $t(106) = 13.63$, $p < .001$. The political status relations in 50 years time is perceived by white participants that the ingroup would represent the non-dominant group (M=4.82, SD=4.10) relative to black people (M=9.25, SD=2.71), $t(105) = -7.9$, $p < .001$. This perception is again shared by black participants who perceive the outgroup (white people) as non-dominant in 50 years time (M=3.71, SD=4.63), relative to the black people as ingroup (M=10.57, SD=1.58), $t(113) = 13.56$, $p < .001$.

The participants were also asked to indicate how the political status relations should be ideally between white and black people in South Africa. White participants indicate that the ingroup should be politically non-dominant (M=7.12, SD=2.73) relative to black people (M=8.17, SD=2.73), $t(104) = -2.79$, $p < .01$. Black participants indicate that their ingroup should have political power (M=10.71, SD=1.19) relative to white people (M=3.71, SD=4.59), $t(109) = 14.36$, $p < .001$.
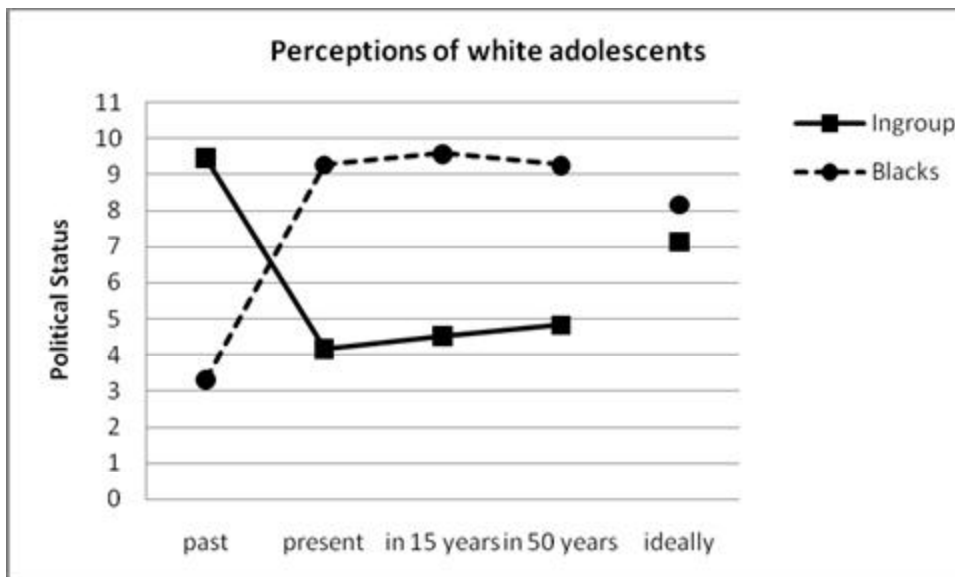
Figure 7: White 2008 adolescents perceived political status relations

Perceptions of black adolescents
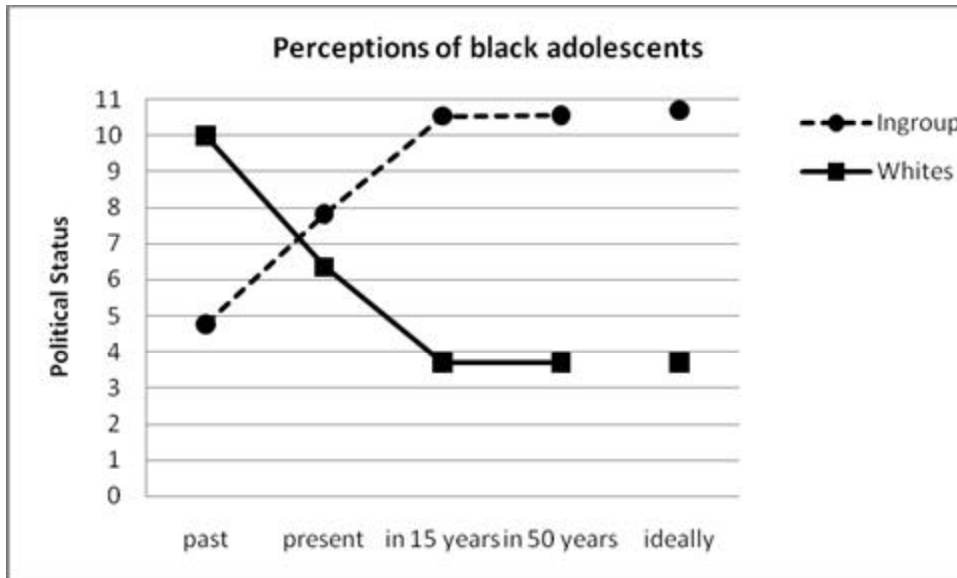
Figure 8: Black 2008 adolescents perceived political status relations

To sum up, white and black participants show a certain agreement on the economic status relations of white and black South Africans. White South Africans are perceived as the dominant group of the past while black South Africans are perceived as the dominant group at present and in the near and distant future. Disagreement between white and black participants exists in terms of the ideal status relations. White participants desire equal status, while black participants desire that their group will be the dominant group relative to white South Africans. The comparison of the perceptions on economic status relations found in study 1 and study 2 shows that, white participants seem to be consistent with their perceptions on economic status relations, while black participants' perceptions changed seemingly. In 2007, black participants perceived white South Africans as current dominant group and as equal with black South Africans in the future. However, participants from the same school perceived one year later the ingroup (black South Africans) as the dominant group economically (compared to white South Africans) at present as well as in the future.

In respect to political status relations, white and black participants show agreement in that white South Africans hold political power in the past, while black South Africans are in political power in the present and in the near and distant future. Both groups also agree on the ideal political status relations in that black South Africans are depicted to represent the political majority.

By taking the outlined results into consideration the following hypotheses can be stated from SIT perspective: Since white and black participants perceive the economic and political status relations as secure we predict for both groups that idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances are most likely to be chosen that represent prototypes of their ingroups (H2).

Main Analysis

Choice of idols

Table 5 summarizes the results of idols for the white and black participants. According to our hypotheses we would expect that white and black participants predominantly chose idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances but not idols representing political figures. We would further assume that white and black participants do not differ in their choice of political figures.

Table 5: Percentages of idols chosen by white and black participants

Category of idol	Groups		
	Whites (Ranks)	Blacks (Ranks)	Adjusted Residuals
Myself	10.3 (4)	0	sig.
Parents	29.0 (1)	3.4	sig.
Family	3.7	3.4	ns
Personal Acquaintances	3.7	19 (3)	sig.
Religious Figures	0	4.3	sig.
Political Figures	3.7	19.8 (2)	sig.
Sports Stars	13.1 (3)	2.6	sig.
Pop stars	27.1 (2)	46.6 (1)	sig.
	$X^2(20) = 136.74, p < .001$		

White and black participants choose predominantly idols as predicted: the majority of white participants chose parents and pop stars as idols followed by sport stars and myself answers (H1), while the majority of black participants chose pop stars and personal acquaintances (H2). However, somehow surprisingly, black participants also named political figures relatively often. In one year, the choice of political idol for black adolescents has almost doubled from 10.4% to 19.8%. It must be noted that the second study took place at a time where South Africa was celebrating Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday. Mandela (8 times) was the most named political figure but black adolescents might perceive him more as a hero than a political figure.

Frequently named idols for white participants were Charlize Theron (2), Jessica Alba (2), Natalie Du Toit (3), Oprah Winfrey (5), Pierre Spies (3), Charl Burger (3), Mandela (3), "my mother" (16), "my father" (12) and "myself" (11), while frequently named idols for black participants were Alicia Keys (2), Angelina Jolie (2), Tyra Banks (2), Beyonce (5), Chris

Brown (2), Dr Phil (2), Oprah Winfrey (4), Princes Magogo (2), Mandela (8), Hitler (2), Robert Mugabe (2), Thabo Mbeki (4) and "my mother" (2). Different to study 1, black and white participants in study 2 share common idols such as Oprah Winfrey and Mandela.

In order to obtain a better understanding about possible changes in the choice of idols, Table 6 summarises the idols identified in study 1 and 2 for white and black adolescents.

Table 6: Comparison of 2007 and 2008 choice of idol for black and white adolescents in percentages

	Groups			
Category of idol	2007 black (rank)	2008 black (rank)	2007 white (rank)	2008 white (rank)
Myself	0	0	11.7 (4)	10.3 (4)
Parents	9	3.4	34 (1)	29.0 (1)
Family	3	3.4	10.7 (5)	3.7
Personal Acquaintances	10.4 (3)	19 (3)	4.9	3.7
Religious Figures	0	4.3	0	0
Political Figures	10.4 (3)	19.8 (2)	1.9	3.7
Sports Stars	17.9 (2)	2.6	17.5 (3)	13.1 (3)
Pop stars	49.3 (1)	46.6 (1)	19.4 (2)	27.1 (2)

It is interesting to note that black participants did not choose themselves as idol in either study, while white adolescents choose themselves as idol relatively often (rank 4). The choice of sports stars as idol for black adolescents has reduced drastically in the past year, while the choice of idols such as personal acquaintances and religious figures slightly increased. The

rank order of idols shown by white adolescents did not change over the two studies, except that family members as idols dropped remarkably.

As mentioned above, the second study took place at a time where South Africa was celebrating Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday, which could explain the increase of idols representing political figures. However, we reasoned that Mandela might be perceived as a hero rather than a political figure. Besides the difference in results of idol choice in the categories personal acquaintances, political figures and sports stars the rank order did not change remarkably for black adolescents.

Furthermore we were interested whether changes occurred in the representativeness of idols as either ingroup or outgroup members over the one year period. Table 7 and 8 summarise the results for white and black participants separately. As the results indicate, white and black participants seem to be consistent in choosing predominantly ingroup members as idols. This result suggests that the perceptions of lack of permeability of intergroup boundaries did not change over the one year period (H1).

Table 7: Ingroup / outgroup idol representation for white participants in percentages (study 1 and 2)

	Idols group	
	White (ingroup)	Black (outgroup)
Whites 2007	92	8
Whites 2008	85.6	14.4
	$X^2 (1) = .89, p > .05$	

Table 8: Ingroup / outgroup idol representation for black participants in percentages (study 1 and 2)

	Idols group	
	Black (ingroup)	White (outgroup)
Blacks 2007	85.1	14.9
Blacks 2008	88.4	11.6
	$X^2 (1) = .76, p > .05$	

Discussion

Based on the results gained in study 1, we concluded that both white and black adolescents might not perceive intergroup relations as insecure but as secure. The perception of secure intergroup relations was assumed for white adolescents under the condition that they perceive white South Africans as non-dominant in the distant future (in 50 years time), and for black adolescents under the condition that they perceive their group to be in political power at present and in the future. The analysis of the perceived status relations confirmed our assumptions and informed the hypothesis proposed for both groups, which stated that idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances are most

likely to be chosen that represent prototypes from the ingroup. This hypothesis could be confirmed for both groups.

The comparison of idols found in study 1 and 2, showed that white and black participants are consistent in their choice of idols in terms of the spheres within society that these idols represent as well as the representativeness of idols rather ingroup than outgroup members. This consistency appears to indicate that both white and black participants perceive their societal context as stable rather than in the process of social change.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The overall aim of the present study was to test the functional relationship between the choice of idols and social identity management strategies as proposed by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) which was assumed to be moderated by the status position of the adolescent's group s/he belongs to. We hypothesised that under the condition that intergroup boundaries are perceived as permeable, it is likely that idols such as glamorous figures and sports stars are chosen that are representative of the outgroup. We further predicted that under the condition that status relations are perceived as secure (i.e. stable and legitimate), idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances are chosen that rather represent prototypes from the ingroup and that under the condition that the status relations are perceived as insecure (i.e. unstable and illegitimate), idols such as political figures are chosen that are assumed to contribute to change (i.e. members of the non-dominant group) or to maintain (i.e. members of the dominant group) the actual intergroup relations. In order to

specify our hypothesis for the groups under investigation, we had to determine the perceived status positions of these groups. This was achieved by the assessment of the participants' perceptions of the economic status relations between black and white South Africans (Study 1). Based on these results it was therefore hypothesised that past white adolescents were to report idols that represent prototypes for their group, while past black adolescents were to report political figures as idols that were seen to contribute to achieving social change. For current adolescents it was predicted that white and black participants will choose political figures that contribute to changing their perceived non-dominant status position. The results of study 1 confirmed our hypotheses for past adolescents but not for current adolescents. In order to ensure that our conclusion of the status position of current white participants is accurate, we aimed to specify their perceptions of stability of the intergroup relations in the second study. Consequently, we included an additional time perspective (in 50 years time). We also extended the perception on society by not only assessing economic intergroup relations but also political intergroup relations. The extended assessment of the intergroup relations was assumed to allow a more precise definition of the perceived status relations. In study 2, these extensions led to different conclusions of the status positions of white and black participants than in study 1 and consequently, to different hypotheses.

The new hypotheses stated that both white and black adolescents are more likely to choose idols such as glamorous figures, sports stars, family members, personal acquaintances that represent prototypes of their ingroups, which were confirmed in the second study. The different conclusions on the status positions in study 2 which were based on the extension of the time perspective as well as the inclusion of the political comparison dimension point towards the

relevance of a precise understanding of the perceived status positions when testing the functional relationship between the choice of idols and social identity management strategies. The present findings support Turner's (1999) argument that the precise examination of theoretically important constructs such as status positions is a crucial key when conducting theory-based research on changes in intergroup relations.

The fact that the hypotheses in study 1 was confirmed for the adult participants but not for the adolescent participants also suggests that the functional relationship between the choice of idols and social identity management strategies might be particularly salient when individuals either anticipate or experience social change. This conclusion is supported by the very nature of Social Identity Theory which represents a theory that conceptualises social change (Dumont & Louw, 2009).

The results of the repeated cross-sectional analysis indicated stability of idols for both black and white adolescents. This result is in line with Teigen et al.'s (2000) results of their meta-analysis which showed that shifts in choice of idols occur over a long time period and would therefore only be noticeable in studies that capture bigger periods of time. This found stability in idols also suggests that the adolescents studied over a period of one year did not experience any unexpected changes in the status relations between black and white South Africans unlike the adolescents of the past.

When analysing the particular idols of white and black adolescents, two major differences are evident in study 1 and 2: firstly, white adolescents name themselves as idols, while black

adolescents do not at all. Secondly, parents as idol play a role in both groups but much more so for white adolescents. The lack of myself responses for black adolescents could be explained in terms of cultural differences between black and white South Africans. While white adolescents might be more guided by an individualistic approach to life, black adolescents might be more guided by a relational approach to life (Fiske, 1991). A relational approach within the South African context is Ubuntu, which conceptualises the approach to life as "a person is a person through other persons" (Foster, 2006). Given that Ubuntu is a core approach to life among black South Africans, one would expect external models (idols) rather than the rejection of them (i.e. myself responses).

An explanation for the latter result that parents represent idols for a majority of white participants (study 1 and 2) can at this stage of research only be speculative in nature. However, the fact that parents as idols were significantly less mentioned by past white adolescents relative to current white adolescents requires an explanation which takes present situational aspects of this group into account. One could assume that white adolescent participants perceive and experience white South Africans at present as an alienated minority, which can result in an increased tendency to value family more than the broader community as research on immigration processes has shown (e.g. Zagefka & Brown, 2002). However, future research needs to be conducted to verify this assumption for the South African context.

Since our studies were based on cross-sectional and repeated cross-sectional designs, we cannot make any conclusions about a causal functional relationship between the choice of idols and social identity management strategies, which represent one of the limitations of the present

study. A second limitation refers to the fact that the idols of past adolescents were assessed based on the participants' memories, which always includes biases. A third limitation is related to our samples which were not representative since convenience sampling techniques were applied and which limits the generalisibility of our results. A final limitation refers to the fact that preferences for identity management strategies were not assessed in the present study. The inclusion of preferences for identity management strategies would have provided more robust evidence for our assumption that the choice of idols stands in a functional relationship with social identity management strategies moderated by the status position of the adolescent's group s/he belongs to.

Overall results of the present study indicate that when studying idols in the social context in which they are chosen it is necessary to conceptualize social context as precise as possible. Social Identity Theory seems to be an appropriate theoretical framework when social context is particularly conceptualised as social change. However, in order to capture social context in its complexity it is necessary to apply additional theoretical perspectives. Subsequently, more research on theoretical and empirical levels is necessary in order to further elaborate the link between choice of idols and social context.

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Dear participant

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Please note: We are interested in your honest opinion about various social issues. We would like to know what *you* personally think. **There are no right or wrong answers!!** Try not to think too long about each statement. Usually your first response is the one you come back to at the end.

Please respond to every item even if you find it difficult to form an exact opinion.

Thank you.

Lyn Lupke.

1. Who did you most want to be like when you were a teenager in the 1980's?

_____

_____

Below you see a drawing of a ladder with 11 rungs (labelled from 0 to 11). Please imagine that this ladder represents *economic status* in South Africa. The top step represents the best *economic status* one could imagine while the bottom step represents the worst. Please indicate your opinion about which step White South Africans and Black South Africans stand on by ticking the appropriate rung.

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Please complete the following information by ticking the appropriate box or writing in the space provided.

1. Age: _____ years

2. Gender: female ☐ male ☐

3. How would you see yourself in terms of colour / race?

Black ☐   Coloured ☐   Indian ☐   White ☐

Other: Specify _____

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Who do you most want to be like?

_____

_____

In the next section, you will be provided with five different time eras that you need to rate according to where your group (white people) was in comparison to black people. Below you see a drawing of a ladder with 11 rungs (labelled from 0 to 11). Please imagine that this ladder represents *political power* in South Africa. The top step (11) represents the most *political power* one could imagine while the bottom (0) step represents the least *political power*.

Please indicate your opinion about which step White South Africans and Black South Africans stand on by ticking the appropriate rung. You need to make 10 crosses indicating the position of white people in comparison to black people. For example if you consider that white people had much less *political power* 25 years ago than black people you would give white people the position 2 and black people the position 9. This needs to be done for all five time eras listed.

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