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Self-Depersonalization and Ingroup Favoritism in Minimal Group Hierarchies

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Abstract. Research suggests that members of low-status groups are more likely than members of high-status groups to show self-depersonalization and to favor ingroup members over outgroup members. The present research tests two alternative explanations of this status asymmetry: One explanation is based on the motive for achieving a positive social identity, and the other explanation is based on the willingness to cope with a social identity threat. Three minimal group experiments examine these two explanations. Supporting the identity motive explanation, the findings show that self-depersonalization (Studies 1–3) and ingroup favoritism (Study 3) are less prominent in the high-status group than in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups. Moreover, the results do not support the identity threat explanation because self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism were not weaker in the low-status group than in the status-unspecified group.

Keywords: minimal groups, ingroup status, social identity, self-depersonalization, ingroup favoritism

There are many ways in which membership into social groups shapes individuals' cognition, affect, and behavior. Feelings of depersonalization and ingroup favoritism are two key illustrations of such group influence. *Self-depersonalization* is typically defined as the process by which "people come to see themselves more as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category than as unique personalities defined by their differences from others" (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987, p. 50). *Ingroup favoritism* reflects the group members' tendency to favor ingroup members over outgroup members.

Recent research showed that both phenomena are largely contingent on the ingroup's position in a social hierarchy. Members of low-status groups (e.g., women, ethnic minorities, people from disadvantaged social backgrounds) tend to define themselves according to their group membership. Conversely, members of high-status groups (e.g., men, ethnic majorities, people from upper social classes) tend to define themselves according to their own idiosyncrasies (e.g., Cadinu, Latrofa, & Carnaghi, 2013; Grier & Deshpandé, 2001; Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012; McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978). The more pronounced tendency toward self-depersonalization in low-status than in high-status groups is documented in research in which status hierarchies are created with the use of experimental procedures (e.g., Iacoviello & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2015; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998, 2008).

Research on ingroup favoritism also acknowledges the role of ingroup status. On the one hand, in evaluations of status groups on status-relevant dimensions, members of the high-status group show greater ingroup favoritism than their lower-status counterparts (who often show outgroup favoritism). At

least in stable and legitimate hierarchies, members of both status groups tend to agree about the status superiority of the ones and the inferiority of the others (see Bettencourt, Charlton, Dorr, & Hume, 2001; Rubin & Hewstone, 2004). On the other hand, research also shows that, to compensate for the disadvantaged status of the ingroup, members of low-status groups tend to behaviorally support ingroup members more than outgroup members. This instrumental use of ingroup favoritism is less conspicuous among members of the high-status group, especially in stable and legitimate social hierarchies (e.g., Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Cunningham & Platow, 2007; Rubin, Badea, & Jetten, 2014; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006).

The Identity Motive and the Identity Threat Perspectives

In order to understand such status asymmetries, it is crucial to highlight the specific functions of self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism. These group phenomena originate from strategies to protect the ingroup, and eventually to enhance its position in the social hierarchy. There is indeed evidence that self-ingroup assimilation has protective implications insofar as it fosters a sense of community and of collective efficacy (Crocker & Major, 1989; Lent, Schmidt, & Schmidt, 2006; Wombacher & Felfe, 2012). Likewise, behaviorally favoring the ingroup may be considered an instrumen-

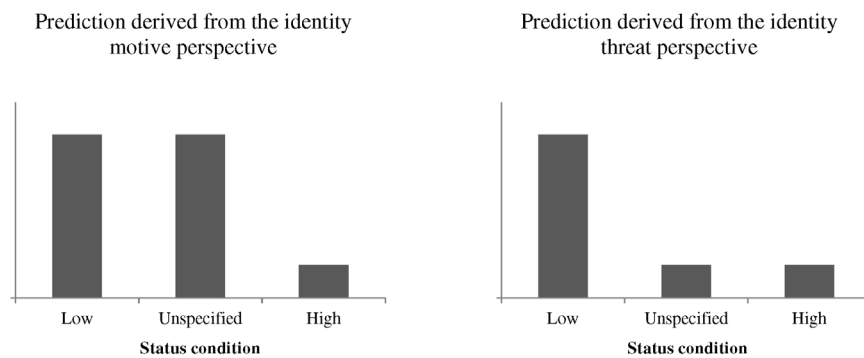


Figure 1. Predictions about self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism derived from the identity motive perspective and the identity threat perspective.

tal strategy to enhance the ingroup status (Scheepers et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

At this point, we introduce two alternative (though non-mutually exclusive) accounts of the status asymmetry on self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism. The first account is based on the motive for a positive social identity. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), people are motivated to achieve self-worth. One way to fulfill this motive is to secure the superiority of the ingroup over the outgroup on a valued dimension of comparison. Once the motive is fulfilled, the motivational drive toward the achievement of a positive social identity is eased (e.g., Kuhl, 1986). In stable and legitimate hierarchies, the motivation to achieve a positive social identity is thus eased among members of the high-status group (see Marques, Abrams, & Serôdio, 2001). Conversely, this motivation invigorates members of the low-status group since they have not reached the standard of a positive social identity. The second account is based on the willingness of group members to cope with an explicit threat to their social identity (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). This account assumes that self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism are effective strategies to cope with a threat to the social identity's value.

In sum, the identity motive perspective contends that members of high-status groups show low levels of self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism because they have no need to use these strategies (since their motive for a positive social identity is eased). The identity threat perspective suggests that members of low-status groups show high levels of self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism in order to deal with, and eventually to overcome, the negative social identity. Accordingly, when comparing a low-status group and a high-status group, these two perspectives lead to the same prediction. To disentangle these perspectives, it is necessary to devise a control condition in which the ingroup status is unspecified. Such a condition would indeed fuel a motivation to achieve a positive social identity (like in the low-status group and unlike in the high-status group) without producing an explicit threat to the social identity (like in the high-status group and unlike in the low-status group).

Present Research

The present research examined self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism in social hierarchies and confronted the identity motive and the identity threat perspectives. In three studies, we created minimal social hierarchies and tested three hypotheses. Study 1 investigated self-depersonalization in a low-status and a high-status group. According to Hypothesis 1 (H1), the tendency to depersonalize the self is more pronounced in the low-status group than in the high-status group. In addition to the low- and high-status conditions, Studies 2 and 3 added a control condition in which ingroup status was unspecified, mirroring the typical features of minimal group procedures (see Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). Such a status-unspecified condition allows us to test the identity motive and identity threat perspectives. Based on the identity motive perspective, the motivation to achieve a positive social identity should be eased in the high-status group and fully aroused in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups. Accordingly, Hypothesis 2a (H2a) predicts that self-depersonalization emerges less strongly in the high-status group than in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups. Hypothesis 3a (H3a) makes the parallel prediction for ingroup favoritism. Based on the identity threat perspective, members of the low-status group should experience an explicit threat to their social identity and be motivated to cope with it, whereas members of the high-status and the status-unspecified groups should not. Accordingly, Hypothesis 2b (H2b) predicts that self-depersonalization is more prominent in the low-status group than in the high-status group or the status-unspecified group. Hypothesis 3b (H3b) makes the parallel prediction for ingroup favoritism (see Figure 1). Study 2 tested H2a and H2b, and Study 3 tested H2a and H2b as well as H3a and H3b.

Furthermore, the present research introduced behavioral measures of self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism. This is in line with the concern in social sciences to focus on direct observation of behavior (see Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007). The ingroup favoritism measure was adapted from Quiamzade, Mugny, Konan, Darnon, and Bridge's (2017) hindrance procedure. The self-depersonalization measure consisted of a newly devised measure of a person's self-perception as

a group member, an individual, or both. We first conducted a pilot study to ascertain the construct validity of this new measure.

Pilot Study

Participants and Procedure

The sample consisted of 69 university students (52 female, 16 male, one sex-unspecified; $M_{\text{age}} = 25.43$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 6.27$), who were recruited by email to participate in an online questionnaire. The procedure was inspired by Tajfel et al.'s (1971) studies on minimal groups. The participants completed an esthetic task that served to categorize them into the minimal groups. The participants were informed that they would be shown five pairs of abstract paintings. In each pair, one painting was allegedly created by a painter named Dusek and the other by a painter named Tausig. The participants' task was then to indicate, for each pair, which painting they preferred. After completing the task, the participants were allegedly assigned to the Dusek group if they had shown an overall preference for Dusek's paintings, and to the Tausig group if they had shown an overall preference for Tausig's paintings (see Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998).

The self-depersonalization measure was introduced immediately after group assignment. The participants were instructed that, in order to present themselves to other participants in the study, they could choose one of three different logos. The logos ranged from an individual to a group pole of a continuum. At the individual pole, the logo mentioned a freely chosen pseudonym. At the group pole, the logo mentioned the ingroup's name (Dusek or Tausig). A mixed logo was also provided, which mentioned the ingroup's name and a freely chosen pseudonym. If participants chose the individual or the mixed logo, they were asked to name their favored pseudonym. Choosing the group logo should reflect self-perception in terms of ingroup membership, whereas choosing the individual logo should reflect self-perception in terms of a distinct person. The mixed logo should indicate an intermediate self-perception.

We then assessed the reasons for the participants' choice. The participants first responded to an open-ended question asking for a brief explanation of the reasons for their logo choice. They then responded to scale items, two of which assessed the tendency to individualize the self ("I chose this logo because it allows me to distinguish myself from others," and "I chose this logo because I wanted to highlight my personality") and two of which assessed the tendency to depersonalize the self ("I chose this logo because I wanted to show my membership to the Dusek/Tausig group to the other participants," and "I chose this logo because I think I am similar to the other members of my group").

Results and Discussion

Overall, the group logo was the most frequently chosen logo (59.4%), followed by the mixed logo (26.1%) and the individual logo (14.5%). A χ^2 analysis showed a departure from chance distribution, $\chi^2(2, N = 69) = 25.52$, $p < .001$. Since choice of logo is an ordinal variable (from the individual pole to the group pole), we then performed an ordinal regression analysis on choice of logo, using the polytomous universal model (PLUM; Norušis, 2005), with group membership (Dusek vs. Tausig) as the predictor. Choice of logo did not vary with respect to group membership, $\beta = 0.16$, 95% CI = [-0.40, 0.72], Wald (1, $N = 69$) = 0.31, $p = .58$.

Inspection of the participants' reported reasons for choosing a particular logo suggested that participants who chose the group logo focused on group membership. Examples are: "Membership in a single group, no individuality," "Group membership is of utmost importance as we can communicate among ourselves for further knowledge," and "No need for many pieces of information, our group membership should be clear." Conversely, participants who chose the individual logo stressed the distancing of self from ingroup and its picturing as a distinct person: "I do not wish to be assimilated into a group just because I have a preference for Dusek's paintings," "To represent myself as an individual, I need a logo that distinguishes me from the others, and the pseudonym is particularly useful," and "Simple - customizable." Finally, participants' reasons for choosing the mixed logo emphasized the motivation to communicate the group membership while adding an individualizing feature: "The logo should represent my person and my team. It is the best balance between the two," "My own touch within the group," and "A combination of my group and my individuality."

Principal components analysis was used to analyze the four reasons items. After varimax rotation, the two individualization items loaded on Component 1 ($\lambda = 1.54$) with loadings greater than .80, and the two depersonalization items loaded on Component 2 ($\lambda = 1.51$) with loadings greater than .80. Factor scores were extracted and used as a depersonalization variable and an individualization variable. To assess the construct validity of the logos measure, we performed an ordinal regression on choice of logo (*individual logo* = 1, *mixed logo* = 2, *group logo* = 3) with the two factor score variables as predictors. As expected, the depersonalization factor score was positively related to choice of logo, $\beta = 0.85$, 95% CI = [0.39, 1.31], Wald (1, $N = 69$) = 12.98, $p < .001$, whereas the individualization factor score was negatively related to the choice of logo, $\beta = -1.36$, 95% CI = [-1.88, -0.84], Wald (1, $N = 69$) = 26.39, $p < .001$. These findings support our speculation that choosing a logo located at the group pole is associated with a motivation to depersonalize the self, while choosing a logo located at the individual pole is associated with a motivation to individualize the self. Thus, choice of logo provides a valid behavioral measure of self-depersonalization.

Study 1

This study examined self-depersonalization tendencies in status groups. Participants were assigned to a low-status or a high-status group, allegedly on the basis of their artistic abilities. Self-depersonalization was assessed using the participants' choice of logo. H1 predicts that self-depersonalization will be more pronounced among members of the low-status group than among members of the high-status group.

Method

Participants

University students were recruited in the common areas of the university building and asked to participate in an interactive experiment about people's esthetic abilities. We targeted six sessions of six same-sex participants, for a total sample of 72 participants (36 men and 36 women, $M_{age} = 22.39$, $SD_{age} = 3.96$).

Procedure

Participants in each session were invited to sit in front of one of six computers. They then completed an esthetic task similar to the one in the pilot study that served to categorize them into groups, with one major modification in order to manipulate the hierarchy of groups (see Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998, 2008). The experimenter first emphasized the concern for people to develop knowledge in the art domain. Participants were then informed that they would be shown five pairs of abstract paintings. In each pair, one painting was allegedly created by a painter named Dusek and the other by a painter named Tausig. The participants were then told that art experts had come to a consensus that Dusek's paintings are of better quality than Tausig's paintings. The participants' task was to indicate, for each pair, which painting was of better quality. After completing the task, the participants were allegedly assigned to the Dusek group if they had consistently identified the best painting and to the Tausig group if they had not. (Group assignment actually occurred on a random basis.) Thus, Duseks possessed greater status than Tausigs. In each session, three participants were assigned to the Dusek group (the high-status group) and three participants were assigned to the Tausig group (the low-status group). To prevent a potential confound of group status and group size (e.g., Simon & Brown, 1987), we further instructed participants that, overall, "there were approximately the same number of people in the Dusek and the Tausig groups."

Immediately after the categorization phase, the experimenter asked members of each group to move to two different corners of the room. In order to foster ingroup involvement, members of each group were presented with an additional art painting and invited to take part in a 5-minute discussion about the quality of the painting. After the discussion, the participants

were asked to go back to their seats to complete a computer-based questionnaire in which they rated the prestige of each minimal group and completed the self-depersonalization measure. At the end of the session, the experimenter fully debriefed the participants about the purpose of the study.

Group Prestige

The participants responded to two items aimed at assessing the extent to which they felt the ingroup and outgroup memberships were prestigious (1 = *not at all prestigious*, 7 = *very prestigious*). This measure allowed us to check whether the group status manipulation was effective.

Self-Depersonalization

The participants were asked to imagine that an art journal would publish the opinions about the additional painting they had stated during the discussion. To present themselves in the art journal, the journal's editor would invite them to choose one of the three logos. As in the pilot study, the self-depersonalization measure consisted of the choice of a group logo, a mixed logo, or an individual logo.

Results

Group Prestige

We performed a repeated-measures ANOVA on the group prestige measures (ingroup vs. outgroup), with ingroup status (high vs. low) as a between-participant factor. The analysis showed a significant main effect of ingroup status, $F(1, 70) = 6.82$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, which was qualified by a significant interaction between Group Prestige \times Ingroup Status, $F(1, 70) = 27.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .22$. Testifying to the consensual perception of the status hierarchy, members of the high-status group judged the ingroup ($M = 4.17$, $SE = 0.22$) as more prestigious than the outgroup ($M = 2.97$, $SE = 0.19$), $F(1, 70) = 18.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$, whereas members of the low-status group judged the ingroup ($M = 3.86$, $SE = 0.22$) as less prestigious than the outgroup ($M = 4.42$, $SE = 0.19$), $F(1, 70) = 4.00$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. The main effect of group prestige was nonsignificant, $F(1, 70) = 2.64$, $p = .11$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$.

Self-Depersonalization

We performed an ordinal regression analysis on choice of logo (*individual logo* = 1, *mixed logo* = 2, *group logo* = 3) with ingroup status (*high* = 0, *low* = 1) as the predictor. This analysis produced an ingroup status effect, $\beta = 0.90$, 95% CI = [0.02, 1.78], Wald (1, $N = 72$) = 4.01, $p < .05$. Consistent with H1, members of the low-status group were more inclined than members of the high-status group to choose logos located at the group pole (see Table 1).

Table 1. Choice of logo as a function of ingroup status (Study 1)

Logo	Ingroup status		Total
	High	Low	
Individual	36.1%	11.1%	23.6%
Mixed	30.6%	41.7%	36.1%
Group	33.3%	47.2%	40.3%
Total	100% (n = 36)	100% (n = 36)	100% (N = 72)

Discussion

The findings of Study 1 attested to the effectiveness of the status manipulation. Members of both groups judged membership in the high-status group to be more prestigious than membership in the low-status group. Moreover, the results supported H1a by showing that members of the high-status group were less likely than their low-status counterparts to depersonalize the self. However, the design of this study did not allow us to investigate the identity motive and the identity threat perspectives. To this end, the following two studies added a status-unspecified condition to the status conditions.

Study 2

In the preceding study, participants interacted with other ingroup members and debated about the quality of a painting. This had the advantage of emphasizing the group memberships and providing a naturalistic group setting, but slightly deviated from classical minimal procedures. Indeed, the absence of interpersonal and intergroup interactions is an important criterion defining the minimality of a group setting (see Tajfel et al., 1971). Moreover, in Study 1, the procedure created a status hierarchy, but did not devise a status-unspecified condition. These limitations were overcome in the present study. The independent variable was ingroup status (high vs. low vs. unspecified), and the dependent variable was self-depersonalization. Based on the identity motive perspective, H2a predicts that self-depersonalization will be less prominent in the high-status group than in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups. Based on the identity threat perspective, H2b predicts that self-depersonalization will be more prominent in the low-status group than in the high-status and the status-unspecified groups.

Method

Participants

University students were recruited by email to participate in an online study. A total of 137 students (99 women, 34 men, and

4 sex-unspecified; $M_{age} = 24.18$, $SD_{age} = 6.27$) participated in this study.

Procedure

First, the participants performed the esthetic task and were assigned to the high-status group, the low-status group, or the status-unspecified group. As in Study 1, the participants performed the esthetic task and were then randomly assigned to the Dusek group (high-status) or the Tausig group (low-status). In the status-unspecified condition, the instructions were similar to those in the pilot study. Participants were assigned to the groups on the basis of their own esthetic preferences. All of the participants then assessed the prestige of the ingroup and the outgroup, responded to the self-depersonalization measure, provided their demographic information, and were fully debriefed about the purpose of the study.

Group Prestige

The participants assessed the prestige of the ingroup and the outgroup (1 = *not at all prestigious*, 7 = *very prestigious*).

Self-Depersonalization

Each participant was informed that s/he could choose a logo (individual, mixed, or group) to present her-/himself to the other study participants.

Results

Group Prestige

A repeated-measures ANOVA on the group prestige measures (ingroup vs. outgroup), with ingroup status (high vs. low vs. unspecified) as a between-participant factor, yielded a significant main effect of ingroup status, $F(1, 134) = 3.28$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, which was qualified by the expected interaction between Group Prestige \times Ingroup Status, $F(1, 134) = 14.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$. Testifying to the successful status manipulation, members of the high-status group judged the ingroup ($M = 3.28$, $SE = 0.21$) to be more prestigious than the outgroup ($M = 2.77$, $SE = 0.21$), $F(1, 134) = 12.03$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, whereas members of the low-status group judged the ingroup ($M = 2.81$, $SE = 0.23$) to be less prestigious than the outgroup ($M = 3.43$, $SE = 0.29$), $F(1, 134) = 15.81$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$. In the status-unspecified condition, ingroup prestige ($M = 3.73$, $SE = 0.21$) did not differ from outgroup prestige ($M = 3.67$, $SE = 0.21$), $F(1, 134) = 0.18$, $p = .67$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$. The main effect of group prestige was nonsignificant, $F(1, 134) = 0.03$, $p = .86$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$.

Self-Depersonalization

In order to adequately test Hypotheses H2a and H2b, we first computed two Helmert contrasts with the status variable. The first contrast (C1) compared the high-status group (coded as

Table 2. Choice of logo as a function of ingroup status (Study 2)

Logo	Ingroup status			Total
	High	Low	Unspecified	
Individual	57.4%	28.6%	35.4%	40.9%
Mixed	8.5%	9.5%	12.5%	10.2%
Group	34.0%	61.9%	52.1%	48.9%
Total	100% (<i>n</i> = 47)	100% (<i>n</i> = 42)	100% (<i>n</i> = 48)	100% (<i>N</i> = 137)

-2) to the low-status and the status-unspecified groups (both coded as 1). The second contrast (C2) compared the low-status group (coded as -1) to the status-unspecified group (coded 1), with the high-status group coded as 0. A significant effect of C1 would thus support H2a (i.e., the identity motive perspective), and a significant effect of C2 would support H2b (i.e., the identity threat perspective). Both effects would suggest a linear relationship, such that self-depersonalization would be the weakest in the high-status group, moderate in the status-unspecified group, and the strongest in the low-status group.

We performed an ordinal regression analysis on choice of logo, with the two orthogonal contrasts (C1 and C2) as predictors. Consistent with H2a, the analysis showed a significant effect of C1, $\beta = 0.21$, 95% CI = [0.07, 0.35], Wald (1, *N* = 137) = 8.16, $p = .004$ (see Table 2). Participants in the high-status group were less likely than participants in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups to choose logos located at the group pole. At variance with H2b, the effect of C2 did not reach significance, $\beta = -0.11$, 95% CI = [-0.37, 0.14], Wald (1, *N* = 137) = 0.76, $p = .38$, suggesting that there was no difference in choice of logo between the low-status and the status-unspecified groups.

Discussion

The results of Study 2 supported H2a: Self-depersonalization was of greater magnitude in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups than in the high-status group. Moreover, the results did not support H2b because there was no reliable difference between self-depersonalizing tendencies in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups. These findings speak in favor of the identity motive perspective and do not support the identity threat perspective.

Study 3

Study 3 aimed at replicating and extending the findings of Study 2 to a behavioral measure of ingroup favoritism. The independent variable was ingroup status (high vs. low vs. unspecified). Self-depersonalization was assessed with the logo measure, and

ingroup favoritism was assessed on the basis of actual behavior aimed at easing or hindering ingroup and outgroup members' performance on an ostensible future task. Hypotheses based on the identity motive perspective predict that self-depersonalization (H2a) and ingroup favoritism (H3a) will be the lowest in the high-status group. Hypotheses based on the identity threat perspective predict that self-depersonalization (H2b) and ingroup favoritism (H3b) will be the highest in the low-status group.

Method

Participants

University students were invited by email to participate in an online study on people's esthetic abilities. As recommended by Simmons, Nelson, and Simonsohn (2011), we aimed at recruiting at least 50 participants per condition. Therefore, we kept inviting students until we reached this target. The final sample consisted of 160 participants (115 women, 43 men, and two sex-unspecified: $M_{age} = 24.81$, $SD_{age} = 8.39$).

Procedure

As in Study 2, the participants performed the esthetic task and were randomly assigned to the status condition or to the status-unspecified condition. They reported the prestige of the ingroup and the outgroup and then chose a logo to present themselves to the other study participants. Ingroup favoritism was then assessed using a hindrance measure adapted from Quiamzade et al. (2017). At the end of the study, the participants provided their demographic information and were fully debriefed about the purpose of the study.

Group Prestige and Self-Depersonalization

Group prestige and self-depersonalization were measured the same way as in Study 2.

Ingroup Favoritism

The participants were first informed that they would take part in a quiz aimed at providing a test of their esthetic abilities in the domain of color recognition. The quiz was presented as a contest involving all of the participants. It was composed of two types of questions: Type A and Type B. For Type A questions, the participants were presented with a series of color names and asked to identify, for each color name, the corresponding color from four possible colors. For Type B questions, the participants were presented with a series of colors and asked to choose, for each color, one of four options to name the color. We devised these two types of questions so that Type B questions would be evidently trickier to solve than Type A questions. A pretest in which 18 participants (15 women and 3 men: $M_{age} = 23.29$, $SD_{age} = 4.12$) completed the quiz and rated the difficulty of the two types of questions (1 = *very easy*, 7 = *very*

difficult) demonstrated this expected difference in difficulty ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.59$ for Type A questions, and $M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.18$ for Type B questions), $t(17) = 4.43$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.15$.

After completing the quiz, participants in the main study were informed that they would pick up two series of questions for the next two participants in the study, one of whom was an ingroup member and the other an outgroup member. They were presented with 16 potential questions that were identified by a sequential number and a question type. Of the 16 questions, 8 were Type A and 8 were Type B. The participants were asked to assign 8 questions (of the total of 16 questions) to each of the two group members. Assigning many difficult questions to one participant implies that one is making the quiz more difficult for that participant and perhaps impairing that participant's quiz performance. Thus, the measure of ingroup favoritism consisted in allotting a lower number of difficult questions to the ingroup member than to the outgroup member.

Results

Group Prestige

We performed a repeated-measures ANOVA on the group prestige measures (ingroup vs. outgroup), with ingroup status (high vs. low vs. unspecified) as a between-participant factor. The analysis produced the expected interaction between Group Prestige \times Ingroup Status, $F(1, 157) = 37.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .32$. In the high-status group, the ingroup ($M = 4.09$, $SE = 0.19$) was rated as being more prestigious than the outgroup ($M = 3.28$, $SE = 0.21$), $F(1, 157) = 19.62$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$. Conversely, in the low-status group, the ingroup ($M = 2.76$, $SE = 0.23$) was rated as being less prestigious than the outgroup ($M = 4.13$, $SE = 0.21$), $F(1, 157) = 56.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .27$. Finally, in the status-unspecified group, there was no significant difference between the perceived prestige of the ingroup ($M = 3.26$, $SE = 0.19$) and the outgroup ($M = 3.17$, $SE = 0.20$), $F(1, 157) = 0.26$, $p = .61$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$. Again, the participants appeared to perceive ingroup status correctly. Both the main effects of group prestige and ingroup status were nonsignificant, all $ps > .14$.

Self-Depersonalization

As in Study 2, we first computed the two orthogonal contrasts with the status variable, C1 and C2. We then performed an ordinal regression analysis on choice of logo, with the two contrasts (C1 and C2) as predictors. Consistent with H2a, the analysis showed a main effect of C1, $\beta = 0.15$, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.28], Wald (1, $N = 160$) = 5.75, $p = .02$. Participants in the high-status group were less likely than participants in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups to choose logos located at the group pole (see Table 3). At odds with H2b, the effect of C2 was not significant, $\beta = 0.01$, 95% CI = [-0.20, 0.22], Wald (1, $N = 160$) = 0.09, $p = .93$, suggesting that there were no differ-

Table 3. Choice of logo as a function of ingroup status (Study 3)

Logo	Ingroup status			Total
	High	Low	Unspecified	
Individual	37.7%	28.3%	25.9%	30.6%
Mixed	41.5%	28.3%	31.5%	33.8%
Group	20.8%	43.4%	42.6%	35.6%
Total	100% ($n = 53$)	100% ($n = 53$)	100% ($n = 54$)	100% ($N = 160$)

ences between the low-status and the status-unspecified groups with respect to choice of logo.

Ingroup Favoritism

We performed a repeated-measures ANOVA on the number of difficult questions with C1, C2, and target group (within-subject variable: ingroup member vs. outgroup member) as predictors. All interactions were entered into the model, except the one involving the two orthogonal contrasts. The analysis first revealed a general ingroup favoritism tendency, $F(1, 157) = 7.19$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Participants allotted more of the difficult questions to the outgroup member than to the ingroup member ($M_s = 4.29$ and 3.85 , $SD_s = 1.32$ and 1.41 , respectively). Consistent with H3a, this effect was qualified by the interaction between C1 \times Target Group, $F(1, 157) = 4.23$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. As shown in Figure 2, in the modality combining both the low-status and the status-unspecified conditions, participants allotted more of the difficult questions to the outgroup member than the ingroup member ($M_s = 4.38$ and 3.71 , $SD_s = 1.40$ and 1.46 , respectively), $F(1, 159) = 9.98$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, whereas no differences emerged in the high-status group ($M_s = 4.09$ and 4.13 , $SD_s = 1.30$ and 1.11 , $F < 1$). At odds with H3b, the interaction between C2 \times Target Group was not significant, $F(1, 157) = 0.61$, $p = .44$, $\eta_p^2 < .03$. Ingroup favoritism was of similar magnitude in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups.

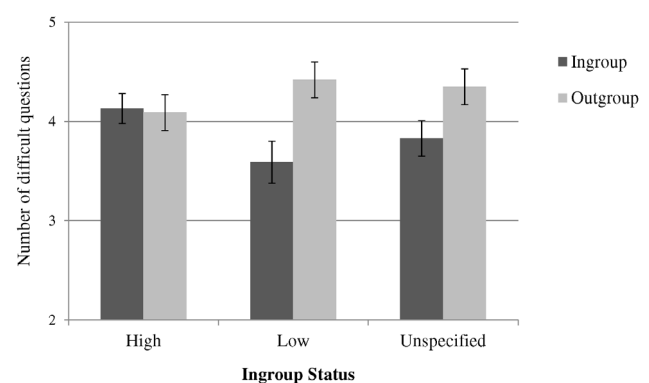


Figure 2. Number of difficult questions allotted to the ingroup member and the outgroup member, as a function of ingroup status (Study 3). Error bars represent standard errors.

Discussion

Replicating the findings of Study 2 and consistent with the identity motive perspective, Study 3 showed that members of the high-status group were less likely than members of the low-status and the status-unspecified groups to depersonalize the self (H2a). The findings did not support the identity threat perspective (H2b) because there was no difference between self-depersonalization in the low-status and the status-unspecified groups.

A corresponding pattern of findings was observed for the measure of ingroup favoritism. These results were consistent with the identity motive perspective (H3a), showing that members of the low-status and the status-unspecified groups similarly tended to ease the task of ingroup members compared to the task of outgroup members. By contrast, ingroup favoritism was unreliable among members of the high-status group. At odds with the identity threat perspective (H3b), ingroup favoritism did not differ in the low-status group and the status-unspecified group. Ingroup threat (i.e., in the low-status group) was found to be a sufficient but not a necessary condition for the emergence of strategies aimed at pursuing a positive social identity. The mere uncertainty about the ingroup's status (i.e., in the status-unspecified group) indeed triggers the same levels of self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism.

General Discussion

The present research examined self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism in minimally-created group hierarchies. We conducted three studies in which we assigned participants to a high-status group or a low-status group (Studies 1–3). The findings consistently showed that members of the high-status group were less likely to depersonalize the self and to display ingroup favoritism, as compared to members of the low-status group. Studies 2 and 3 tested two (nonmutually exclusive) explanations of this status asymmetry. One explanation was based on the motive to pursue a positive social identity and the other was based on coping with social identity threat. To test these identity and threat perspectives, we devised a control condition in which the ingroup status was unspecified. The findings provided support for the identity motive perspective, revealing that self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism were weaker in the high-status group, as compared to both the low-status and the status-unspecified groups. Conversely, the identity threat perspective was not supported by our data. Indeed, self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism were not stronger in the low-status group than in the status-unspecified group.

These findings were observed using newly-devised behavioral measures. First, choice of group versus individual logos assessed the participants' tendency toward self-depersonalization. A pilot study confirmed the construct validity of this meas-

ure. Furthermore, though inspired by research on social comparison (Quiamzade et al., 2017), the present research was the first to use a hindrance procedure as a behavioral measure of ingroup favoritism. In sum, the present research offers new tools for examining group phenomena in social hierarchies.

Implications

Past research documented a more pronounced tendency of low-status groups to match their self to the features that characterize the whole ingroup (i.e., self-depersonalization; Cadinu et al., 2013; Grier & Deshpandé, 2001; Kraus et al., 2012) and to show more support to ingroup members than to outgroup members (i.e., ingroup favoritism; Rubin et al., 2014; Scheepers et al., 2006). The present research has important theoretical implications as it tested two alternative explanations for these group outcomes. In support of the perspective based on the motive toward a positive social identity (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the findings indicated that self-depersonalization and an instrumental form of ingroup favoritism are used as strategies aimed at achieving a positive social identity. These strategies were indeed reduced when a positive social identity was granted by membership in a high-status group. These findings did not support the explanation based on social identity threat (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999). Indeed, self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism were not more pronounced in the group whose social identity valence was explicitly threatened (the low-status group) than in the group whose social identity valence was simply unknown (the status-unspecified group). Our research suggests that an explicit threat to one's social identity valence is sufficient, but not necessary to induce intergroup worldviews and behaviors such as self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism. In other words, self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism do not appear to stem from the willingness to cope with an explicit threat to one's social identity valence, but merely from the motivation to pursue a positive social identity.

Our findings also contribute to the literature on ingroup favoritism. Recent research distinguished between symbolic forms (e.g., trait ratings) and material forms (e.g., resource allocations) of ingroup favoritism (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2002). Our assumption is that assessments of symbolic forms of ingroup favoritism are likely to reveal a "consensual discrimination" (Rubin & Hewstone, 2004), in which members of both the high-status and the low-status groups acknowledge the superiority of the former on dimensions that are relevant to the status hierarchy (especially when the hierarchy is perceived as stable and legitimate). Symbolic forms of ingroup favoritism are thus more conspicuous in high-status groups than in low-status groups (see Bettencourt et al., 2001). This is consistent with the findings from the present research regarding participants' assessment of the groups' prestige, demonstrating an ingroup favoritism among members of the high-

status group and an equally strong outgroup favoritism among members of the low-status group. Conversely, assessments of material forms of ingroup favoritism are likely to show a more pronounced tendency for members of the low-status group to favor the ingroup. Indeed, such a behavior would be used instrumentally in an effort to claim a more favorable position in the status hierarchy (Rubin et al., 2014; Scheepers et al., 2006; see also Deschamps & Personnaz, 1979).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One limitation of our research is that it documents status effects on self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism in a particular kind of social hierarchy. Indeed, the minimally-created hierarchies were likely to be perceived as rather stable, legitimate, and impermeable. What would be the reactions of members of the high-status group in an unstable and illegitimate hierarchy? Since the favorable ingroup status would be in jeopardy, members of the high-status group could be inclined to depersonalize the self and to support ingroup members over outgroup members (see Cunningham & Platow, 2007; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). Furthermore, we wonder whether members of the low-status group would maintain high levels of intergroup outcomes in permeable hierarchies, or if they would rather tend toward individualistic strategies (e.g., individual mobility). Future research should examine self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism in social hierarchies that vary according to these properties of the social structure.

Conclusion

The present research highlights the central role of ingroup status on self-depersonalization and ingroup favoritism tendencies. Self-categorization theory predicts that these intergroup outcomes occur whenever an intergroup comparison framework is psychologically salient (Turner et al., 1987). Our findings complement this conclusion by drawing attention to the motive for positive intergroup distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Indeed, self-categorization theory adequately predicts people's tendencies when their motivation for achieving a positive social identity is aroused (i.e., in low-status and status-unspecified groups), but less so when this motivation is fulfilled through the favorable position of the ingroup in a secure social hierarchy (i.e., in high-status groups).

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