Universidade do Minho
Instituto de Ciências Sociais

Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade
www.cecs.uminho.pt

Asymmetries in the Perception of Other as a Function of Social Position and Context*

Rosa Cabecinhas
Professora Auxiliar

cabecinhas@ics.uminho.pt

Lígia Amâncio
Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa
(ISCTE)

Universidade do Minho
Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade
Campus de Gualtar
4710-057 Braga
Portugal

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Asymmetries in the Perception of Other as a Function of Social Position and Context[2]

Abstract:
In the two experiments reported here an adaptation of the paradigm developed by Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman (1978) was used to investigate: a) the impact of contextual factors on the accentuation effect, and b) asymmetries in the outgroup homogeneity effect as a function of relative group status. In both experiments targets were categorized on the basis of highly salient physical features, which also evoke asymmetric positions in intergroup relations: color of the skin in experiment 1 and sex in experiment 2. In experiment 1, with black and white participants, context was manipulated by introducing topics of discussion which were relevant (interethnic relations) and irrelevant (student university life) to the categorization, whereas in experiment 2, with female and male participants, the relevant topic of discussion was dating relationships and the irrelevant one was the same as in the previous experiment. According to our results, the accentuation effect was affected by context in experiment 1, but not in experiment 2, and the outgroup homogeneity effect was not symmetrical. Overall, target members of subordinate groups, blacks in experiment 1 and females in experiment 2, were more homogenized than target members of dominant groups, whites in experiment 1 and males in experiment 2.

Keywords:
Perceived group homogeneity, levels of explanation, social identity

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INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, biases in the perception of group variability have received a great deal of attention from researchers, in particular the outgroup homogeneity effect. This effect has been defined as the tendency to perceive members of the outgroup as less variable than members of the ingroup, and has been commonly associated with the statement "*they all look alike but we don't*" (Quattrone & Jones, 1980, p. 142).

Several explanations of the outgroup homogeneity effect have been proposed. A widely accepted explanation is based on the perceiver's differential familiarity with ingroup and outgroup members. Because people may interact more frequently and in a wider range of contexts with members of their own groups than with members of other groups, they may be more familiar with ingroup members and better differentiate them one from another (Jones, Wood & Quattrone, 1991; Linville, Salovey & Fischer, 1986; Linville, Fischer & Salovey, 1989). Another broadly accepted explanation of this effect is that perceiver's judgements of ingroups and outgroups involve different cognitive processes. For example, Park and her colleagues sustained that perceivers retrieve more information about particular exemplars or sub-groups when judging ingroups and more information about the group as a whole when judging outgroups (Park & Rothbart, 1982; Judd & Park, 1988; Park, Ryan & Judd, 1992). Ostrom and his colleagues (Ostrom, Carpenter, Sedikides & Li, 1993) maintained that information about the ingroup is organized by person categories whereas information about outgroups is organized by stereotype-related attribute categories.

Other explanations emphasize the role of the perceptual context in which judgements of variability occur. According to Turner and his colleagues (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987; Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994), the ingroup and the outgroup would be perceived as equally homogeneous in an intergroup context

because the categorization would lead the perceiver to enhance group boundaries and emphasize similarities within each group. In contrast, the outgroup homogeneity effect would appear when judgements about the ingroup occur in an intragroup context and judgements about the outgroup occur, implicitly, in an intergroup context, due to the perceiver's membership. Thus, judgements about the ingroup would occur at a lower level of abstraction than judgements about the outgroup leading to a perceived ingroup heterogeneity and to the depersonalization and homogenization of outgroup members.

All these explanations have an important feature in common: they assume, explicitly or implicitly, symmetrical status relationships between the groups concerned, that is, they do not take into account the effects related to the social status hierarchies (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998). Several studies already suggest that perceived group variability should be examined in a more comprehensive manner and that different levels of explanation should be articulated, taking into consideration the distinction made by Doise (1984; 1986) of four levels of analysis in social psychology.

Explanations of the outgroup homogeneity effect are predominantly located at the intra-individual and situational levels (e.g., Linville *et al.*, 1989; Judd & Park, 1988; Oakes *et al.*, 1994). However, explanations located at the positional and ideological levels of analysis have also been advanced (e.g., Lorenzi-Cioldi & Doise, 1990; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998). These authors emphasize the need to take the context and the nature of intergroup relations into account, as these factors are associated with complex patterns of homogeneity and differentiation.

Several reviews of the empirical research show that, although the outgroup is usually perceived as more homogeneous than the ingroup, under certain conditions, the ingroup is perceived as more homogeneous than the outgroup (e.g., Devos, Comby & Deschamps, 1996; Krueger, 1992; Mullen & Hu, 1989; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992;

Quattrone, 1986; Simon, 1992). Thus, serious doubts are thrown upon the symmetry and universality of the outgroup homogeneity effect which is "...by no means a universal law..." (Simon, 1992, p.1). Research conducted by this author, based on social identity theory, has evidenced that the typical outgroup homogeneity effect may be reversed when participants belong to minority groups (Simon & Brown, 1987; Simon & Pettigrew, 1990; Simon, Glässner-Bayerl & Stratentwerth, 1991). However, there is some controversy on the confounding of group size with the ingroup-outgroup distinction (Bartsch & Judd, 1993; Simon, 1995) and with the groups' social status (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998). According to this perspective, the groups relative positions do not depend strictly on their size or other contingent factors, instead, they depend particularly on the anchoring of intergroup relations in largely shared symbolic systems, which prevent the interchangeability of the groups' relative positions (Deschamps, 1982).

Considering the latter definition of intergroup asymmetries, Lorenzi-Cioldi (1988; 1998) has proposed an approach to social categorization and social identity which requires the distinction between two sorts of groups: dominant, or collection groups, which are made up of individuals who are perceived, and perceive themselves, as distinct and unique; and dominated, or aggregate groups, which are defined in terms of the holistic features that distinguish their group from the dominant group. These theoretical assumptions were tested by the author in a series of experiments which also demonstrated that, in the case of sex groups, the dominant and distinctive behavior is more typical of men, whereas undifferentiation towards both the outgroup and the ingroup is more typical of women. Other studies have shown that the dominant and dominated patterns of differentiation are inscribed in gender representations and not in sex groups (Amâncio, 1989) and that they prevail over situational contexts of intersex

relations (Amâncio, 1997). Furthermore, the presence of the outgroup renders gender group membership more salient to women (Abrams, Thomas & Hogg, 1990), who also use more gender-related schemes than men in self-descriptions (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1991).

The meaningful interdependence underlying social identity dynamics in intergroup relations of domination has also been evidenced in cognitive processes. Although sex categories are highly accessible and informative, the quality of this information differs, as female individuals are more likely to be described as women than male individuals are to be described as men (Hurtig & Pichevin, 1990; 1995). In an experiment on the outgroup homogeneity effect, using male and female participants, which also aimed at unconfounding differences in groups' social status and in their size, Lorenzi-Cioldi *et al.* (1995) have shown that target members of the dominated group, females, are more homogenized than target members of the dominant group, males. However, the relevance of this theoretical approach does not apply only to sex categories. To the extent that dominant groups perceive themselves, and are perceived, as the point of reference in relation to which other groups are defined, this approach can also be extended to other social groups occupying socially asymmetric positions (Doise & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1989), namely ethnic groups.

In line with this perspective, the experiments presented here aimed at articulating levels of analysis in the processing of information concerning social categories. The choice of the color of the skin in experiment 1, and sex in experiment 2, as categorization criteria, was based on the following reasons. Firstly, these categories are highly accessible and difficult to suppress (Messick & Mackie, 1989; Park & Rothbart, 1982; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Stangor, Lynch, Duan, & Glass, 1992). Secondly,

intergroup relations based on race[3] and sex have a long history of meaningful interdependence and asymmetrical positions in western societies (Guillaumin, 1992; Bourdieu, 1998). Hence, in order to assess the relevance of the ideological level of analysis in information processing concerning race and sex groups, we conducted two experiments using an adaptation of the sentence-matching paradigm (Taylor *et al.*, 1978). The underlying idea of this experimental paradigm is the following: if the color of the skin (experiment 1) and the sex of the person (experiment 2) are used to codify and store the information, then participants will be able to remember whether it was a white or a black man (experiment 1), a man or a woman (experiment 2) who made a certain statement, but not necessarily which person made that statement. The sentence-matching task allows the estimation of two types of errors, for each participant: within-groups errors, when a sentence is attributed to another member of the same group, and between-groups errors, when a sentence is attributed to a member of the other group.

According to social categorization theory (Tajfel, 1972), the presence of a classification leads to a perceptive exaggeration of within-groups similarities and between-groups differences. This consequence of categorization, which is designated as the accentuation effect, can be measured in this experimental paradigm by the higher number of within-groups errors comparatively to between-groups errors. This pattern of results has been evidenced in several studies using the same paradigm (Taylor *et al.*, 1978; Arcuri, 1982; Hewstone, Hantzi & Johnston, 1991; Stangor *et al*., 1992; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998). In line with previous research we predicted a higher number of within-groups errors than between-groups errors in both experiments (hypothesis 1).

[3] In experiment 1 we manipulated the color of the skin. The term "race", as used in this paper, refers to the socially constructed category usually activated when perceivers are faced with persons with different colors of the skin.

We also aimed at analyzing the impact of contextual factors on the accentuation effect. For this purpose we introduced topics of discussion in our experiments that were relevant ("interethnic relations" in experiment 1 and "dating relationships" in experiment 2) and irrelevant for intergroup relations ("student university life" in both experiments), in a design similar to the one used by Hewstone *et al.* (1991, Experiment 1). With this manipulation we expected to increase the salience of the categorization in the relevant topic of discussion conditions. However, previous research on the influence of the context on categorical salience has shown inconsistent results. If we assume race and sex categories as particularly salient and automatically codified in the absence of any specific instructions (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), then contextual variations will be less relevant, as shown by Hewstone *et al.* (1991, Experiment 1) for race, than in the case of less salient criteria of categorization, such as the color of the hair or the clothing style. On the other hand, some authors argue that contextual factors, such as the instructions given to the participants, the nature of the tasks immediately preceding the experiment, or the categorical relevance of the topic of discussion increase the situational accessibility of a particular categorization (van Knippenberg, van Twuyver & Pepels, 1994). According to Lorenzi-Cioldi (1993; Lorenzi-Cioldi, Deaux & Dafflon, 1998), situational dynamics which increase the salience of social categories facilitate the anchoring of the perceptions in social reality, thus increasing the efficiency of the ingroup-outgroup categorization. Following this assumption we expected a stronger accentuation effect in the relevant topic of discussion conditions in both experiments (hypothesis 2).

Taking into account the groups' social status allows us to confront two types of logic in the study of the of group homogeneity: the usual logic in terms of the relationship between participants and targets (ingroup or outgroup) versus a logic in

terms of the targets' membership (white or black persons; men or women). The former would state that the participants perceive outgroup members as more homogenous than the ingroup members (outgroup homogeneity effect), whereas a logic in terms of the targets' membership would state that some groups (low-status groups) are consensually perceived as more homogeneous than other groups (high-status groups) (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998).

In our two experiments we confronted these two types of logic by analyzing the participants within-groups errors in two different ways. Following the usual logic, within-groups errors are classified by their relevance to outgroup targets versus ingroup targets. Participants are expected to make more within-groups errors when target persons are members of their outgroup than when they were members of their ingroup. Although Taylor *et al.* (1978) have not found support for this effect, other experiments using this paradigm evidence the outgroup homogeneity effect under some conditions (Frable & Bem, 1985; Ostrom *et al*., 1993). In our experiments we also expected participants of both groups (black and white participants in experiment 1 and men and women in experiment 2) to make more within-groups errors about the outgroup than about the ingroup, that is, overall we expected an outgroup homogeneity effect (hypothesis 3).

Following a logic in terms of targets' membership, the within-groups errors are classified by their relevance to low-status targets versus high-status targets. There is already some evidence, using adaptations of Taylor's experimental paradigm, that asymmetries shape the perception of the social groups' variability (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993) and that female targets are more homogenized than male targets (Lorenzi-Cioldi *et al.*, 1995). With respect to other social groups, these authors state (p. 214) that "if status is indeed the critical moderator of the homogeneity effects we observed in this

research, effects analagous to the ones presented here should be observed for other groups that differ in status (e.g., groups defined by race, age...)". Recently, it was demonstrated that members of low-status groups are more homogenized than members of high-status groups in an experiment using two minimal groups (Lorenzi-Cioldi *et al*., 1998, experiment 2). This asymmetry was also found in experiments using members of two permeable-boundary groups, that is, groups that encourage upward mobility: graduate and undergraduate students (Sedikides, 1997, experiment 1) and freshpersons and upper-class students (Lorenzi-Cioldi *et al*., 1998, experiment 1; Sedikides, 1997, experiment 2). In accordance with previous results, in our experiments participants are expected to make more within-group errors when target persons are members of the subordinate group (blacks in experiment 1 and females in experiment 2) than when target persons are members of the dominant group (whites in experiment 1 and males in experiment 2). That is, overall, we expect target members of subordinate groups to be more homogenized than target members of the dominant groups, regardless of whether the perceivers are themselves members of the subordinated or dominant group (hypothesis 4).

EXPERIMENT 1

Method

Participants and Design

Fifty-six male undergraduate students from University of Minho, 29 white and 27 black (mean age = 23 years) participated in this experiment. The independent variables were the participants' ethnic group (black and white), the target persons' ethnic group

(black and white) and the relevant versus irrelevant topic of discussion ("interethnic relations" and "student university life"). These manipulations yielded a 2x(2)x2 factorial design with a repeated measure in the second factor. Participants of each ethnic group were randomly assigned to each topic of discussion condition.

Stimulus materials

a) *Photographs* - Photographs of target persons were taken in another town (distance = 400 kms) in order to reduce the likelihood of any participant recognizing any target person. Colored photographs of young people of the same age (and sex) group as the participants were selected, according to the following criteria: similarity of the facial expression (neutral); not having any particular physical mark on the face; and informal clothing (they all wore a shirt). Photographs of three white men and three black men were selected to be used as targets. Each photograph showed only the neck and face of the individual and they all had the same white background.

b) *Topics of discussion* - In both conditions, statements made by target persons were selected recordings of real discussions involving groups of three black and three white students. Twelve sentences were selected for each topic of discussion (two per participant), according to the following criteria: clearness of formulation; similar length; the content of the sentence did not allow the identification of the ethnic group of the person who had said it. "Race" or "color of the skin" were never mentioned in the sentences selected for the discussion about student university life and "student university life" was never mentioned in the sentences selected for the discussion about interethnic relations. Examples of statements made for each topic were: "People tend to associate wrong and undesirable behaviors with ethnic minorities. They are always looking for scapegoats" (interethnic relations); "When I came to university I was expecting to find more friendship among colleagues" (student university life).

Two videos were recorded, one for each topic of discussion, to be used in the "learning task". The same photographs were used in both videos. Statements were synchronized with the photographs, each time with a different voice. In both videos each photograph appeared for 15 seconds and was followed by a short break of 1 second. Each photograph was shown twice, in a random order and each participant in the discussion was randomly assigned to two statements during the discussion.

Procedure

Participants who volunteered to participate in this study were tested in small groups. Participants were invited to participate in an experiment on the perception of people and were told that they would be watching a series of statements made by people involved in a discussion. They were also told to pay attention to the video because they would be asked questions about it later. After watching the video, each participant received an envelope with the photographs of the six target persons and a sheet presenting the twelve sentences related to that topic of discussion with a blank next to each, to indicate which of the six targets had made the statement. Each photograph had a number underneath and participants were asked to write the number of the photograph on the blank next to each statement. After all participants had completed this task a careful debriefing followed.

Results and Discussion

Within-groups and between-groups errors were computed for each participant. As the number of between-groups errors expected by chance is higher than the number of within-groups errors, we corrected the between-groups errors by multiplying by 2/3, following Taylor *et al.* (1978). (In a group of six target persons, three of each group, any statement can be: Correctly matched to one speaker; incorrectly matched to one of

the two other speakers of the same group; incorrectly matched to any of the three speakers of the other group).

Before testing the effects of the independent variables on errors, which are particularly relevant for our hypotheses, correct matches of statements to speakers were computed. We found an overall mean of 5.25 correct matches, which is higher than the one obtained by Taylor *et al.* (1978, Experiments 1 and 2). This may derive from the fact that the task used by those authors was more demanding in cognitive terms than the task used in our experiment (6 targets x 6 statements per target = 36 statements, comparatively to 6 targets x 2 statements per target = 12 statements). The analysis of variance (ANOVA) performed on correct answers showed a significant main effect of the participants' ethnic group, $F(1,52) = 10.04$, $p<0.005$, as white participants made more correct matches (M = 6.03) than black participants (M = 4.41), and a Participants' Ethnic Group x Topic of Discussion significant interaction, $F(1,52) = 5.04$, $p<0.05$. Contrasts analysis showed that the effect of the topic of discussion was significant only for white participants: they made less correct matches in the relevant topic of discussion condition (M = 5.31) than in the irrelevant topic condition (M = 6.92), $t(1,52)= - 2.09$, $p<0.05$.

Accentuation effect

In order to examine the accentuation effect, we performed a 2 (type of error: within-groups versus between-groups errors) x 2 (participants' ethnic group) x 2 (topic of discussion) mixed analysis of variance with repeated measures on the first factor. Table 1 displays the mean errors for these conditions. Consistent with our prediction (hypothesis 1), the main effect for type of error was significant: the number of within-groups errors was higher (M = 3.89) than the number of between-groups errors (M = 1.90), $F(1,52) = 28.54$, $p<0.0005$. As expected (hypothesis 2), there was a Type of Error x Topic of Discussion significant interaction, $F(1,52) = 4.33$, $p<0.05$, indicating a

stronger accentuation effect in the relevant topic condition, $F(1,52) = 27.71$, $p<0.0001$, than in the irrelevant topic condition, $F(1,52) = 4.53$, $p<0.05$. However, the accentuation effect was additionally qualified by a three-way interaction between the Type of Error, the Topic of Discussion, and the Participants' Ethnic Group. Contrasts analyses showed that for white participants the accentuation effect was significant in both relevant ($F(1,52) = 4.89$, $p<0.05$) and irrelevant ($F(1,52) = 4.01$, $p=0.05$) conditions, whereas for black participants the accentuation effect was highly significant in the relevant ($F(1,52) = 31.30$, $p<0.0001$) but nonsignificant in the irrelevant topic of discussion condition, ($F(1,52) = 1.24$, $p=0.27$).

In brief, our results show that participants effectively categorized the targets into ethnic groups (accentuation effect). Consistent with our predictions, but conflicting with Hewstone *et al.*' s (1991) findings, results show that the accentuation effect is qualified by context. Race became indeed more accessible in a context highlighting the ethnic categorization ("interethnic relations"). The effect of the context was particularly strong for black participants as they displayed a stronger accentuation effect in the relevant topic condition.

These results may indicate that, in a society where racial categorization is very salient, the small minority of black students feels rather well integrated in the student community, probably because they are a privileged minority. If this is the case, then the "student university life" condition may have had a more important meaning for black students than intended by our manipulation.

==== Insert Table 1 ====

Homogeneity effects

In order to examine the homogeneity biases, we started by partitioning participants' within-groups errors into those pertaining to their ethnic ingroup and those pertaining to their ethnic outgroup. Those errors were examined in a 2 (ingroup vs. outgroup within-groups error) x 2 (participants' ethnic group) x 2 (topic of discussion) mixed analysis of variance, with repeated measures on the first factor. Table 2 displays the within-groups mean errors. There were no effects related to the topic of discussion. Consequently, the data are collapsed across the levels of this variable.

Consistent with our predictions (hypothesis 3) there was a significant main effect of the type of within-groups errors: participants made less within-groups errors regarding their ingroup (M = 1.59) than regarding their outgroup (M = 2.30), $F(1,52) = 11.78$, $p<0.001$. This result indicates that, overall, participants make more confusions about outgroup members than about ingroup members, thus displaying an outgroup homogeneity effect. We also found a Type of Within-groups Error x Participants' Ethnic Group significant interaction, $F(1,52)=14.58$, $p<0.0005$, which reveals the expected asymmetry in the outgroup homogeneity effect (hypothesis 4). Contrasts analyses showed that the outgroup homogeneity effect was highly significant for white participants, those within-group errors were larger for their outgroup (M = 2.34) than for their ingroup (M = 0.93), $F(1,52) = 27.95$, $p <0.0001$. Black participants' within-group errors did not differ significantly for their outgroup and ingroup, $F(1,52) = 0.02$, $p = 0.89$.

==== Insert Table 2 ====

In this analysis of participants' within-groups errors, we have followed a logic in terms of the relationship between participants and targets (ingroup vs. outgroup), commonly used in research on the outgroup homogeneity effect. However, the demonstration of the asymmetry in the latter effect requires an "alternative analysis" (Lorenzi-Cioldi *et al.*, 1995, p. 207). Following these authors, we performed an

alternative ANOVA using the same between-subjects variables but changing the definition of the within-subjects variables, that is, the type of within-groups errors. Instead of classifying participant's within-groups errors by their relevance to participants' ethnic ingroup versus outgroup, they were classified by their relevance to black targets versus white targets. In accordance with our predictions (hypothesis 4), the main effect of the type of within-groups errors was significant: black targets were more homogenized (M = 2.32) than white targets (M = 1.57), $F(1,52) = 14.58$, $p<0.0005$. Consistent with our prior analysis, the Participants' Ethnic Group x Type of Within-groups Error interaction was significant, showing an outgroup homogeneity effect, $F(1,52) = 11.78$, $p<0.05$. Contrasts analyses showed that the targets' ethnic group effect was highly significant for white participants, $F(1,52) = 27.95$, $p<0.0001$, but nonsignificant for black participants, $F(1,52) = 0.02$, $p<0.89$.

Consistent with our predictions (hypothesis 4), we found an asymmetry in the perceptions of groups homogeneity as a function of the groups' relative positions. The analysis based on the ingroup vs. outgroup membership showed that outgroup homogeneity effect was significant only for white participants. The alternative analysis, based on targets' membership, revealed that, overall, black targets were more homogenized than white targets.

EXPERIMENT 2

In the experiment 1 we analyzed the impact of contextual factors on the accentuation effect and the asymmetries in the perceived homogeneity having the color of the skin as cue for categorization. In experiment 2 we use sex as cue for categorization and consequently we changed the relevant topic of condition: "dating relationships" instead of "interethnic relations". As in both experiments the targets were

categorized on the basis of highly salient physical features, which evoke asymmetric positions in intergroup relations, we expected to find a similar pattern of results.

Method

Participants and Design

Eighty-two undergraduate students of University of Minho, 40 male and 42 female (mean age = 21 years), participated in this experiment. The independent variables were the participants' sex, the targets' persons sex and the relevant versus irrelevant topic of discussion ("dating relationships" and "student university life"). These manipulations yielded a 2x(2)x2 factorial design with a repeated measure in the second factor. All participants and targets were white persons. Participants of each sex were randomly assigned to each topic of discussion condition.

Stimulus materials

a) *Photographs* - Selection of the photographs of target persons followed the same criteria and procedure as in experiment 1. Only this time, photographs showed young men and women of the same age (and ethnic) group as the participants. Colored photographs of three men and three women were selected to be used as target persons. All men had short hair and all women had long hair.

b) *Topics of discussion* - Selection of statements made by target persons also followed the same criteria and procedure as in experiment 1. Statements were selected from recordings of real discussions involving groups of six students, three men and three women. Twelve statements were selected for the topic of discussion "dating relationships" and 12 for the topic "student university life". "Sex" was never mentioned

in the sentences selected for the discussion about student university life and "student university life" was never mentioned in the sentences selected for the discussion about dating relationships. Examples of statements made for each topic were: "I think boys' and girls' attitudes towards dating relationships and sexuality are very different" (dating relationships); "In my opinion, university life is precisely what we are doing here: exchanging opinions and points of view" (student university life).

Again two videos were recorded, one for each topic of discussion, to be used in the "learning task" and the same photographs were used in both videos. Statements were synchronized with the photographs. This time statements were made by male and female voices.

Procedure

The procedure was the same as described in the previous experiment. It only differed in the stimulus material (the videos for each experimental condition), the photographs for the "recognition task" and the statements contained in the lists for the "matching task".

Results and Discussion

Within-groups and between-groups errors were computed for each participant. As in experiment 1, between-groups errors were corrected by multiplying by 2/3. Correct matches of statements to speakers were also computed. Once more the overall mean (7.27) of correct answers was higher than in previous experiments (Taylor *et al.*, 1978) and this result can be explained by differences in the complexity of the task. Means of correct answers were similar in both topics of discussion conditions, $F(1,78) = 0.086$, $p = 0.77$, and did not differ for male and female participants, $F(1,78) = 0.381$, $p = 0.54$.

Accentuation effect

A mixed analysis of variance with the type of error (within-groups versus between-groups errors) as within-subjects variable, and the participants' sex and the topic of discussion as between-subjects variables, showed a significant main effect of the type of error, thus revealing the predicted accentuation effect (hypothesis 1). As suggest by Table 3, the number of within-groups errors (M = 2.85) was significantly higher than the number of between-groups errors (M = 1.25), $F(1,78) = 52.78$, $p<0.0001$. However, contrary to the results of the previous experiment and to our predictions (hypothesis 2), the Type of Error x Topic of Discussion interaction was nonsignificant, $F(1,78) = 0.26$, $p = 0.61$, indicating that the accentuation effect was equally strong in both relevant ($F(1,78) = 27.07$, $p<0.0001$) and irrelevant conditions $F(1,78) = 27.91$, $p<0.0001$).

In brief, our results show that participants effectively categorized the target persons into groups defined by gender (accentuation effect). They also reveal that manipulations of context do not increase the extent of the gender categorization. The different pattern of results obtained in experiments 1 and 2, concerning the accentuation effect, point to the evidence that sex is a more accessible category than race. For instead, Stangor *et al.* (1992), using the cued recall task in a research where the two categories were crossed, showed that the accentuation effect was stronger according to sex than according to race, that is, participants made greater use of sex than of race as a category. Similarly, Zàrate and Smith (1990) also crossing both categories but using a social category verification task, found that identification of targets by sex was faster than identification by race.

==== Insert Table 3 ====

Homogeneity effects

In order to examine the outgroup homogeneity effect we started by partitioning the participants' within-groups errors into those regarding to their ingroup and those regarding their outgroup. Those errors were examined in a 2 (ingroup vs. outgroup within-groups error) x 2 (participants' sex) x 2 (topic of discussion) mixed analysis of variance with repeated measures on the first factor. Table 4 displays the within-groups mean errors. As in experiment 1, there were no effects related to the topic of discussion. Consequently, the data are collapsed across the levels of this variable.

The main effect of the type of within-groups error was nonsignificant, that is, overall there was no outgroup homogeneity effect, $F(1,78)=0.21$, $p = 0.65$. However, a Participants' Sex x Type of Within-groups Error significant interaction was found, providing support for the expected asymmetry in the outgroup homogeneity effect, $F(1,78) = 16.14$, $p<0.0001$. Contrasts analyses showed that the outgroup homogeneity effect was present in male participants, those within-group errors were larger regarding their outgroup ($M = 1.83$) than regarding their ingroup ($M = 1.13$), $F(1,78) = 6.95$, $p<0.01$. In contrast, female participants showed an ingroup homogeneity effect, those within-groups errors were larger for their ingroup ($M = 1.81$) than for their outgroup ($M = 0.95$), $F(1,78)= 10,95$, $p<.001$.

As in Experiment 1, to emphasize the asymmetries in the homogeneity effects, we performed an alternative analysis, classifying participants' within-groups errors by their relevance to female targets versus male targets. In this new design, an overall outgroup homogeneity effect would produce a Participant' Sex x Type of Within-groups Error interaction. Consistent with the prior analysis, this interaction was nonsignificant, $F(1,78) = 0.21$, $p=0.65$. As expected, the main effect of the type of within-groups error was significant: Female targets ($M = 1.82$) were more homogenized by participants than male targets ($M = 1.04$), $F(1,78) = 16.14$, $p<0.001$.

==== Insert Table 4 ====

In brief, consistent with the results of other research with gender groups using the cued recall paradigm (Taylor *et al*., 1978; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993; Lorenzi-Cioldi *et al*., 1995), there was no overall bias toward outgroup homogeneity. As predicted, male participants displayed the outgroup homogeneity effect, but female participants reversed the males' trend by displaying an ingroup homogeneity effect. As a consequence, both female and male participants homogenized female targets, as shown by our alternative statistical analysis classifying within-groups errors by the targets' gender.

Concerning the greater homogenization of members of dominated groups, experiment 2 replicates the results of experiment 1, thus providing further support for the hypothesis of the asymmetry in the outgroup homogeneity. However, results of experiments 1 and 2 differ with respect to the weight of the dominated groups' contribution to the overall homogenization of their ingroup, since female participants homogenize their ingroup in comparison to male much strongly than black participants in comparison to white participants.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of these two experiments strongly support the hypothesis of the accentuation effect. Participants made more within-groups than between-groups errors in any of the experimental conditions in both experiments. According to these results, race (experiment 1) and sex (experiment 2) are very useful categorizations for the codification, storing and retrieval of information about social groups. However, context affected the accessibility of race, but not of sex, thus indicating that sex categorization is even more useful. This points to a hierarchy in what has been called the chronic accessibility of these categorizations (Fiske *et al.*, 1991, Fiske and Stevens, 1993), as

confirmed by studies where the two categories were crossed (Stangor *et al.*, 1992; Zàrate & Smith, 1990).

Concerning the outgroup homogeneity effect, data support our most challenging hypothesis: the outgroup homogeneity effect is displayed asymmetrically according to the groups' social position (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1988; 1998). This became particularly clear when we complemented the usual analysis in terms of the relationship between participants and targets (ingroup vs. outgroup) with an analysis in terms of the targets' membership (white vs. black targets; male vs. female targets). The former states that participants perceive outgroup members as more homogeneous than ingroup members (e.g., Park & Rothbart, 1982; Linville *et al*., 1986), whereas a logic in terms of the targets' membership states that dominated groups are consensually perceived as more homogeneous than dominant groups (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998).

The disparity in the findings for black and white participants (experiment 1) and for female and male participants (experiment 2) can be interpreted as the result of the interplay of these two effects: the outgroup homogeneity effect (the tendency to homogenize the outgroup more than the ingroup) and the dominated-group homogeneity effect (the tendency for participants of both groups to homogenize the dominated group). For members of the dominant group (white participants in experiment 1 and male participants in experiment 2) the two effects, the homogenization of their outgroup and the homogenization of the dominated group, would cumulate, thus resulting in a strong outgroup homogeneity effect. In contrast, for members of the subordinate group (black participants in experiment 1 and female participants in experiment 2) the weaker tendency to homogenize their outgroup would counteract the tendency to homogenize the dominated group, thus resulting a

nonsignificant outgroup homogeneity effect (black participants in experiment 1) or even an ingroup homogeneity effect (female participants in experiment 2).

Thus, this central hypothesis of our research was supported in both experiments. Overall, target members of dominated groups were more homogenized by others, belonging to both dominant and dominated groups. However, the consensual perception of women as homogeneous and men as heterogeneous, evidenced in the case of sex groups, was not entirely replicated in the case of ethnic groups. Indeed black participants' perception of both their ingroup and their outgroup seem to be influenced by contextual factors, besides ethnicity, whereas women's perception of other women and men strongly relies on gender meanings. Such meanings enhance the "universal" homogeneity of the female group versus the diversity of the male group and are contained in largely shared sex stereotypes (Amâncio, 1989; 1997). On the other hand, the greater salience of this perception of homogeneity, in the case of women, also seems to indicate a hierarchy in symbolic asymmetry. To the extent that some asymmetrical patterns of intergroup relations constitute basic features of the "social order", they also become more salient than others. In this sense, the chronic accessibility of the sex categorization could be a way of both permanently updating the interdependence between sex groups and preserving its meaning.

The goal of this empirical research was the articulation of levels of explanation (Doise, 1986) in the analysis of biases in the perception of social groups. Evidence from our two experiments enhances the importance of the nature of intergroup relations by showing that cognitive processes and situational dynamics are necessary, but not sufficient, to explain the asymmetric manifestation of the outgroup homogeneity effect. The groups' relative social positions must be taken into account, specially when these

positions are anchored in systems of common values which by and large shape our society.

Since this asymmetry can even lead to an ingroup homogeneity effect, the statement that "they all look alike, but we don't" can be reversed when it is made by members of dominated groups, particularly women: "*We* all look alike, but *they* don't". In other words, the outgroup homogeneity effect is not the only bias in the perception of groups which has important implications for individuals and social relations. The implications of the dominated-group homogeneity effect for the reproduction of the asymmetric positions of social groups must also be considered.

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Table 1 - Within-groups and between-groups mean errors for white and black participants as a function of topic of discussion

	Topic of discussion					
	Interethnic relations		Students university life		Total	
Participants' ethnic group	Within errors	Between errors	Within errors	Between errors	Within errors	Between errors
Whites						
M	3.56	2.08	2.92	1.44	3.28	1.79
SD	1.21	1.33	2.06	1.24	1.65	1.31
(N)	(16)	(16)	(13)	(13)	(29)	(29)
Blacks						
M	5.20	1.33	3.75	2.89	4.56	2.02
SD	2.21	1.45	1.60	1.37	2.06	1.60
(N)	(15)	(15)	(12)	(12)	(27)	(27)
Total						
M	4.35	1.72	3.32	2.13	3.89	1.90
SD	1.92	1.42	1.86	1.48	1.95	1.45
(N)	(31)	(31)	(25)	(25)	(56)	(56)

Note: Error scores could range from 0 to 12.

Table 2 - Within-groups mean errors for white and black participants

Participants' ethnic group	Within-groups errors	
	ingroup errors	outgroup errors
Whites		
M	0.93	2.34
SD	0.80	1.23
(N)	(29)	(29)
Blacks		
M	2.30	2.26
SD	1.35	1.26
(N)	(27)	(27)
Total		
M	1.59	2.30
SD	1.29	1.23
(N)	(56)	(56)

Note: Error scores could range from 0 to 6.

Table 3 - Within-groups and between-groups mean errors for male and female participants

as a function of topic of discussion

	Topic of discussion					
	Dating relationships		Students university life		Total	
Participants' sex	Within errors	Between errors	Within errors	Between errors	Within errors	Between errors
Males						
M	3.00	1.20	2.92	1.36	2.95	1.30
SD	1.73	0.92	1.61	0.99	1.63	0.95
(N)	(15)	(15)	(25)	(25)	(40)	(40)
Female						
M	2.80	1.13	2.73	1.27	2.76	1.21
SD	1.70	0.97	1.91	0.92	1.79	0.93
(N)	(20)	(20)	(22)	(22)	(42)	(42)
Total						
M	2.89	1.16	2.83	1.32	2.85	1.25
SD	1.69	0.93	1.74	0.95	1.71	0.94
(N)	(35)	(35)	(47)	(47)	(82)	(82)

Note: Error scores could range from 0 to 12.

Table 4 - Within-groups mean errors for male and female participants

Participants' sex	Within-groups errors	
	ingroup errors	outgroup errors
Males		
M	1.13	1.83
SD	1.07	1.34
(N)	(40)	(40)
Females		
M	1.81	0.95
SD	1.27	1.10
(N)	(42)	(42)
Total		
M	1.48	1.38
SD	1.22	1.29
(N)	(82)	(82)

Note: Error scores could range from 0 to 6.