



When does anticipating group-based shame lead to lower ingroup favoritism? The role of status and status stability

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HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ We tested whether status, stability and anticipated emotions affect ingroup bias.
- ▶ Anticipated group-based shame inhibited ingroup bias in stable high status groups.
- ▶ Shame did not inhibit ingroup bias in low status or unstable high status groups.
- ▶ Anticipated group-based guilt did not predict ingroup bias in any group.

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ABSTRACT

In two studies we examined whether and when anticipated group-based shame leads to less ingroup favoritism on the part of members of high-status groups in stable hierarchies. In Study 1 ($n = 195$) we measured anticipated group-based shame and found that it only negatively predicted ingroup favoritism in stable high-status groups. When anticipated group-based shame was low, members of such groups exhibited the highest levels of ingroup favoritism. However, these groups displayed the lowest levels of ingroup favoritism when shame was high. In Study 2 ($n = 159$) we manipulated anticipated group-based shame using a bogus-pipeline method. Members of stable high-status groups were less likely to discriminate against a low-status group in the high than in the low anticipated group-based shame condition. This may explain discrepancies in previous research regarding the amount of ingroup favoritism exhibited by (stable) high-status groups: Shame only leads to less discrimination when identity was secure.

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Introduction

Previous research has found inconsistent results regarding the amount of ingroup favoritism exhibited by high-status groups in stable hierarchies. Some researchers suggest that stable high-status groups use their superior position in a social hierarchy to justify discrimination, resulting in ingroup bias (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1987, 1991; Turner & Brown, 1978). Others suggest that stable high-status groups do not need to discriminate against a low-status group because they already possess a secure prestigious position in the social hierarchy, resulting in egalitarian behavior (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995) or even outgroup bias (“noblesse oblige”; Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002). We argue that the amount of ingroup favoritism exhibited by stable high-status groups can depend

on the extent to which ingroup members anticipate experiencing group-based shame for ingroup favoritism, and that this can account for these inconsistent findings.

Anticipated group-based shame may inhibit immoral ingroup actions, such as ingroup favoritism (Shepherd, Spears, & Manstead, in preparation) and is likely to be elicited when a proposed ingroup transgression is believed to be illegitimate (Shepherd, Spears, & Manstead, 2013). In the current paper we extend this research by testing the effects of social status and status stability on this inhibition. We argue that anticipated group-based shame is more likely to moderate ingroup favoritism in stable high-status groups than in unstable high-status groups or in low-status groups. Because their prestigious position is secure, stable high-status groups can exhibit egalitarian behavior without aversive consequences. Such groups are therefore likely to exhibit egalitarian behavior when they anticipate group-based shame for ingroup bias. However, members of unstable high-status groups or of low-status groups may be reluctant to undertake egalitarian behavior when they anticipate group-based shame because this conflicts with them defending or improving their position in the social hierarchy. We tested these hypotheses in two studies.

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Anticipated group-based shame and guilt

People may experience guilt and shame for the actions or attributes of their group in the absence of any direct personal involvement when they appraise these actions or attributes as illegitimate (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, 2003; Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Lickel, Schmader, & Spanovic, 2007). The interpretation of this illegitimate action or attribute determines whether group-based shame or guilt is elicited. Although there is some debate regarding whether shame stems from actions that imply a more global (e.g., Lewis, 1971; Tangney & Dearing, 2002) or a more specific lapse of one's identity and reputation (e.g., Gausel & Leach, 2011; Gausel, Leach, Vignoles, & Brown, 2012), there appears to be consensus that the focus is on one's identity rather than the behavior (Allpress, Barlow, Brown, & Louis, 2010; Ferguson, Brugman, White, & Eyre, 2007; Lickel, Schmader, Curtis, Scarnier, & Ames, 2005). Guilt, on the other hand, is likely to be evoked when people focus on an illegitimate ingroup action (Harth, Kessler, & Leach, 2008; Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006).

Previous research has focused on directly experienced group-based guilt and shame. However, recent research shows that people may anticipate these group-based emotions when they appraise a future ingroup action as illegitimate (Shepherd et al., 2013, in preparation). For example, we have found that people anticipate these emotions in relation to possible future instances of ingroup favoritism (Shepherd et al., in preparation), and that British people may anticipate these emotions for proposals to use military force against Iran's nuclear weapons program (Shepherd et al., 2013). In line with previous literature (e.g., Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhang, 2007; Damasio, 1994; Haidt, 2001), we argue that these anticipated group-based emotions serve the social function of promoting moral intergroup behavior by signaling the aversive consequences of a future ingroup transgression. Group-based shame is closely associated with social identity (Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007; Lickel et al., 2005; Schmader & Lickel, 2006). Its anticipated counterpart is therefore likely to signal that a proposed ingroup action (such as a military intervention in Iran) is likely to damage social identity. Because group members are motivated to protect social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), they are likely to inhibit the emotion-eliciting action. Anticipated group-based shame may, therefore, be regarded as an emotional warning signal designed to prevent group members from performing actions that would damage their social identity. Because anticipated group-based guilt is less closely associated with social identity (Lickel et al., 2007), it is less likely to inhibit future ingroup transgressions. In line with this, we have found that that anticipated group-based shame (but not guilt) positively predicted collective action against a proposed ingroup transgression (Shepherd et al., 2013) and negatively predicted ingroup favoritism (Shepherd et al., in preparation). In the present studies we extend this research by assessing the role of status and status stability in moderating the relationship between anticipated group-based shame and ingroup favoritism. Moreover, we also extend the intergroup literature by assessing whether the amount of ingroup favoritism exhibited by members of stable high-status groups is dependent on the extent to which they anticipate group-based shame for this action.

Status, stability and anticipated group-based shame

As noted above, anticipated group-based shame increases egalitarian behavior and deters transgressions. This anticipated emotion therefore serves the social function of promoting behavior relating to the harm/fairness dimension of morality. Recent research has found that when faced with a threat to the ingroup, group members are more concerned about the ingroup loyalty than harm/fairness moral dimension (Leidner & Castano, 2012). The prosocial effect of anticipated group-based shame may only be present in non-threatening circumstances because in threatening circumstances ingroup loyalty concerns

may override the effects of this emotion. Because the ingroup's status in a social hierarchy and the stability of this hierarchy may pose a threat to the ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), the inhibitory effect of anticipated group-based shame on ingroup favoritism is likely to be dependent on these factors.

Stable high-status groups

Ingroup favoritism is moderated by a group's position in a status hierarchy and the stability of this hierarchy (Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006). As mentioned above, there is some debate regarding the amount of ingroup favoritism exhibited by high-status groups in stable hierarchies. Such groups already possess a secure, prestigious position, and therefore do not need to discriminate against low-status groups for either identity-based or instrumental reasons (Scheepers et al., 2006). Because of their security, stable high-status groups can treat low-status outgroups fairly (or even generously) without losing their advantageous position in the social hierarchy (Leach et al., 2002; Nadler, Harpaz-Gorodeisky, & Ben-David, 2009; Spears, Greenwood, de Lemus, & Sweetman, 2010), leading some researchers to argue that such groups should display egalitarian behavior (Doosje et al., 1995). However, others suggest that these groups may use their superiority to justify ingroup favoritism, resulting in ingroup bias (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1987, 1991; Turner & Brown, 1978).

Jetten and colleagues (Jetten, Spears, Hogg, & Manstead, 2000) provided a way of resolving this issue by suggesting that the amount of ingroup favoritism exhibited by stable high-status groups is moderated by the perceived legitimacy of this behavior. Such groups should display strong ingroup bias when they can use their superior position to legitimize ingroup favoritism, but engage in egalitarian behavior when ingroup favoritism is perceived as illegitimate. As noted earlier, perceiving a future ingroup action as illegitimate is likely to evoke anticipated group-based guilt and shame (Shepherd et al., 2013), and anticipated group-based shame negatively predicts ingroup favoritism (Shepherd et al., in preparation). Extending the work of Jetten and colleagues, we propose that the amount of ingroup favoritism exhibited by stable high-status groups will be moderated by the predicted emotional consequences of the perceived legitimacy appraisal, and more specifically by anticipated group-based shame. When ingroup bias is perceived as illegitimate, stable high-status groups are likely to anticipate group-based shame if group members were to discriminate against the outgroup. Because this group can exhibit egalitarian behavior (or outgroup favoritism) without losing its prestigious position, members are likely to inhibit ingroup favoritism in order to avoid anticipated group-based shame and the implied social identity threat. When ingroup favoritism is believed to be legitimate, on the other hand, shame is unlikely to be invoked in the first place.

Low-status and unstable high-status groups

Low-status groups are motivated to improve their position in the social hierarchy because their inferior status threatens their social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). When the hierarchy is unstable low-status groups may seek to strengthen the ingroup in order to improve their chances of social change (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993) and are therefore likely to exhibit ingroup bias when they believe that enhanced resources would facilitate social change (Scheepers et al., 2006). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) suggests that in stable hierarchies low-status groups cannot alter their position and are therefore likely to refrain from ingroup bias. Similarly, system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Burgess, 2000) suggests that such groups are likely to distribute resources in accordance

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