

Why Do the Privileged Resort to Oppression? A Look at Some Intragroup Factors

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This article shows that (intergroup) oppression can be strategically motivated by (intragroup) processes. It is often assumed that high-status groups oppress when their social position is declining (relative deprivation). Counterintuitively, research shows that oppression also occurs when their position is improving (gratification): a curvilinear relationship referred to as “the v-curve effect.” We test the hypothesis that this relationship is due to intragroup processes within the high-status group: individuals respond strategically to elite norms. Two experiments manipulated participants’ future prospects: to join the nation’s elite in future (relative gratification), social stasis, or status decline (relative deprivation, Study 2). Elite norms toward immigrants (positive, negative) were manipulated independently. The curvilinear relationship was only found when norms were negative. In other words, those who anticipate joining the elite tailor their actions to the norms of their prospective in-group.

As is evident from the contributions to this special issue, the prime concern of students and scholars of collective action has been with the oppressed. Indeed, research has often focused on emancipation efforts (e.g., feminism, civil rights activism, social movement participation). However, although social revolutions

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are a familiar interlude, the pervasiveness of inequality suggests that the oppressive collective action of privileged groups is the depressing refrain of modern history (e.g., Hobsbawm, 1994). Questions about how such oppression is achieved, and to what extent it can be considered collective action, are rarely asked.

In the literature, there is a general assumption that oppression is a “normal,” that is, functional response to threatened or illegitimate privilege. This article argues that oppression is more subtle and multifaceted, and hence theoretically interesting, than that. Oppression may often be more strategically motivated than collective actions of low-status groups. We present an analysis of different motives for participation in oppression. This is derived not just from intergroup relations, but also from the dynamics within groups (i.e., a group-level focus), and from the position of the perpetrating group member within the high-status group (i.e., an individual-level focus). As a test of this model, we present two empirical studies that illustrate how intragroup factors can affect oppressive action intentions with reference to a phenomenon that has recently attracted prominent attention in the research literature, the “v-curve hypothesis.”

Collective Action by High- and Low-Status Groups

The focus of theorizing and research on collective action has been on the underdog. It is hard to think of good reasons why this would be so. One may define *collective action* as “as any action that aims to improve the status, power, or influence of an entire group” (van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009, p. 646). This definition elegantly allows us to include all those cases in which individuals stand up for their group’s rights, thus undertaking actions on behalf of the collective. In the famous image of tanks rolling into Tiananmen square for instance, we understand the actions of the brave individual blocking their way as collective action. Ironically, the mass deployment of brute force he was up against has attracted much less attention in research, despite the fact that oppression (whether one considers genocides, prejudice against immigrants, ethnic minorities, or women, etc.) most unambiguously improves the outcomes of an entire group.

As a result we know a lot about what motivates collective action of the oppressed, much less about motives for oppression. This bias is present in both classic research as well as contemporary research. The classic study of crowds focused mainly on revolutionary crowds (e.g., Allport, 1924, p. 294; Le Bon, 1895/1995). A recent meta-analysis of contemporary literature on collective action found that only a very few studies concerned themselves with high-status groups’ collective actions (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). And this concern with low-status groups is not just empirical: contemporary theories of collective action are also focused mainly on low-status groups.

The three theoretical strongholds in collective action research are injustice (or relative deprivation), identification, and efficacy (Van Zomeren et al., 2008).

All three have been primarily concerned with low-status groups. This is obviously the case in research on injustice which has almost exclusively focused on (deprived) low-status groups (e.g., Runciman, 1966; Walker & Smith, 2002). Identification with the group is another strong predictor of collective action, and such identifications would appear to be important to high status as well as low-status groups. However, the original formulation of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) focused almost exclusively on the process by which low-status groups strive for social change, or not.¹ The key factors in this theory (permeability of group boundaries, legitimacy of intergroup inequalities, and security of status relations) are typically considered from below. Only recently have there been systematic attempts to apply these ideas to high-status groups (Haslam, 2001, pp. 37–40).

The third current perspective on collective action is derived from game theory (Olson, 1968). The individualistic underpinnings of game theory appear very consistent with the mind-set of elites: these, in some respects, are prone to the atomized perceptions of self and others (Lewin, 1948; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2006) that make the mental calculations that are central to game theory possible. Nevertheless, the application of these ideas has been to deprived and disadvantaged groups, and the conditions that provide them with a sense of efficacy (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; see also Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). Again therefore, the high-status group's behavior is kept out of the frame.

Oppression as a natural outcome. At least part of the reason for this relative neglect for the motives of oppression is that it is often considered a normal or even natural phenomenon: where groups compete for scarce resources, oppression appears functional on both evolutionary and economic grounds. Indeed, the idea is common to perspectives in sociology, philosophy, political science, history, economics, and social psychology (Bobo, 1999; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, for reviews). And it goes almost without saying that dominant groups' position provides them with privileged access to the necessary means, ensuring the efficacy of their enterprise.

Three contemporary perspectives are particularly relevant: social dominance theory (or SDT), systems justifications theory (SJT), and social identity theory (SIT).² They agree that intergroup threat produces oppression but advance

¹There is a lot of research on bias displayed by high- versus low-status groups (Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001, for a review), showing that high-status groups display more bias overall. The question in this literature is when low-status group display as much or even more bias (which is taken as an indication of social competition). The behavior of high-status groups, if discussed, tends to be reflected on post hoc (cf. Turner & Brown, 1978).

²In order to be concise, numerous other theories are not discussed, including those about realistic group conflict, frustration–aggression, social learning, and modern racism.

different ideas about the processes involved. Briefly, SDT (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) suggests that some people naturally hold the view that status differences are good—they have a “social dominance orientation.” Individuals with such views would be more likely to endorse actions to preserve status differences when under threat. SJT is not incompatible with this idea. It proposes that humans tend to justify the current social system and the existing social structural conditions of their group within it (Jost & Banaji, 1994). For high-status groups, SJT implies that oppression is a straightforward way of satisfying a need to maintain the status quo (see also Blumer, 1958). Finally, SIT also sees threat as a natural precursor to oppression (Haslam, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Although SIT is a more sophisticated in acknowledging that outright social competition is rare, and is but one strategy for combating (or presumably maintaining) inequality, it nevertheless proposes that threats to the status quo should result in a response from the high-status group to restore or preserve positive in-group distinctiveness. In sum, although these theories emphasize very different processes and variables, they all agree that oppression is a natural response to threat.

Empirical challenges. One problem for theories of oppression is that the empirical relationship between status threats and oppression is elusive. This raises the question whether the motives for oppression are as straightforward and self-explanatory as is often assumed. In Western society, traditionally dominant groups (White heterosexual men, upper and middle classes) still retain the upper hand, but they have clearly “lost” considerable economic and political power over the past century. Despite the fact that this should lead to increased threat levels according to the theories mentioned above, explicit oppression has tended to become rarer, not more frequent, and prejudice has become more subtle, not more blatant (e.g., Jackman, 1994; Kinder & Sears, 1981). In line with this, the relation between economic downturn and intergroup hostility is not as clear as some have suggested (Bonacich, 1972; Hovland & Sears, 1940). In fact, there is an inconsistent relation between economic indicators and prejudicial behavior (Green, Glaser, & Rich, 1998), and this suggests that a closer look at the psychological experience of threat is warranted.

The complex relationship between threat and prejudice is also evident in recent experimental research. High-status group members who are threatened with future deprivation show some oppressive tendencies, but when they look forward to future gratification (status increases!) oppression increases more sharply (Dambrun, Taylor, McDonald, Crush, & Meot, 2006; Guimond & Dambrun, 2002). This finding resonates with historical research suggesting that intergroup struggles are particularly acute when the economic tide is rising after having been low (Rudé, 1964; Tilly, Tilly, & Tilly, 1975). In sum, the relation between threat and prejudice is not as straightforward as is often assumed. One reason for this, we suggest, is that there are multiple motives for oppression.

Strategies of Oppression and Group Outcomes

Oppression is not only the unjust exercise of authority or power. It includes a range of actions to keep low-status groups in subjection and hardship. High-status groups can maintain the status quo by engaging in overt and pervasive exclusion of the low-status group, but this may be rare. Outright oppression and systematic exclusion³ disadvantages the out-group in a visible (possibly violent) fashion. Although such exclusion can maintain inequality for a long time (i.e., “effectively” from a high-status viewpoint), it also risks undermining the long-term stability of the system through its illegitimacy. Such oppression is highly visible for the low-status group and can thus form a clear target for resistance and a powerful source of solidarity (see also Reicher, 1996; Turner, 2005). Long-term, overt, and systematic oppression may thus inadvertently undermine the status quo. Furthermore, these strategies may divide the high-status group itself—especially when questions about the legitimacy of oppression are raised (Mummendey & Otten, 1998; Smith & Postmes, 2009).

A more common and familiar pattern of oppression occurs when the majority of the high-status group does not itself resort to visible and overt oppression but merely endorses and supports actions and/or policies which have such effects. Ad hoc and incidental acts of exclusion (e.g., isolated incidents of discrimination, failure to punish bullying by a few “rotten apples,” support for a xenophobic speech by a politician; Killen, Rutland, & Jampol, 2008, for a review) may at first blush appear to be less harmful. Similarly, political parties may propose policies which systematically disadvantage and exclude certain groups from fully participating in society. However, such acts and policies can be extremely pernicious for a low-status group, to the extent that supporting them becomes normative for the high-status group as a whole. As these acts of exclusion are ad hoc, there is less risk of them reflecting badly on the high-status group as a whole. This “deniability” undermines low-status groups’ emancipatory efforts. As an instrument of oppression, therefore, tacit support for discriminatory policies and actions can be quite effective: it signals the high-status group’s superiority without threatening its morality.

The Intragroup Dimension of Oppression

One key difference between oppression and the actions of low-status groups, is that the scope for participating in oppression for opportunistic reasons is far greater. Many of the participants in oppression may do so without having any express aims to improve the status of their group (i.e., for intergroup reasons)

³*Social exclusion* is used here broadly as excluding from a place or society, and keeping from resources. This is an ongoing strategy rather than a one-off display of in-group bias.

but for other reasons, such as advancing their own interests within the high-status group (i.e., for intragroup reasons). Intragroup factors are often ignored in research on collective action and intergroup relations (although there are exceptions, e.g., Reicher, 1996). In low-status groups, the individual typically makes short-term sacrifices for the potential future benefit of the collective (e.g., there appears to be a negative interdependence between the interests of the individual and those of the collective; Klandermans, 1997).⁴ For example, a woman who chooses to fight discrimination at work typically suffers personal setbacks for some idealized collective benefits. In high-status groups, however, oppression can serve the interests of the individual and the group in parallel ways. As a consequence, there can be a positive interdependence such that discriminatory actions are not just rewarding for the group, but also for individual perpetrators. Consider for example a man working in a slightly sexist environment: For this person, committing a visible act of oppression can have positive consequences for the group (maintenance of status quo), as well as for himself (within-group status, trust and influence).

The participation in institutionalized exclusion may bring individual rewards. Those with moral reluctance to engage in such acts may be compelled to participate in order to avoid being excluded themselves. Those with more opportunistic motives are likely to lead from the front as a way of increasing their own status within the in-group. Although there are risks associated with this (e.g., Enoch Powell's ousting from the British conservative party after his famous "rivers of blood" speech) there are also potential rewards (e.g., the success of politicians such as Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands or Pauline Hanson in Australia). Similar to bullying in schools (Killen et al., 2008, for a review), their actions may be less about maintaining the status quo than about demonstrating their in-group credentials, or about their desire to gain influence over and redefine in-group norms (Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005).

In such cases, we can see that acts of oppression are not just motivated by intergroup relations (conflict, threat), by cognitive factors (prejudice, social identity salience), or by material considerations (profit). Oppression also happens because individuals act strategically to achieve certain objectives within (or with) the in-group.⁵ Obviously, such strategic considerations should be highly sensitive to the prevalent normative climate within the in-group. If one finds, for example, that relatively gratified high-status group members are more likely to be prejudiced (Dambrun et al., 2006; Guimond & Dambrun, 2002), this may reflect the strategic considerations of those high-status group members that displaying prejudice may be normative within their in-group. It is this hypothesis which is tested in the

⁴As one would expect, such sacrifices are most likely to come from those who see inequality as structural, who are highly identified, and who see possibilities for social change. Contrary to economic theses, these are not the most deprived or disaffected.

⁵The more general process at work here is that oppression can play a role in the preservation and/or creation of a sense of unity and belongingness.

present article. One advantage of such a normative explanation is that it does not just predict the occurrence of oppression, but also its dissipation. When considering the changing pattern in discriminatory practices toward women and ethnic minorities during the past century, it is clear that ideological and normative factors have played a prominent part: Pressures for “political correctness” have increasingly marginalized the expression of blatant prejudices. Although an important question is how such norms form and change in the first place, the present article is devoted to providing the “groundwork” demonstration that intragroup processes and norms have an important part to play.

Moving toward the design of the present research, we anchored our studies to one puzzling finding in the literature, which we believe could be explained by some of the intragroup processes mentioned above. Guimond and Damburn (2002) manipulated relative “deprivation” (bad future prospects) and “gratification” (good future prospects) of university students and examined their prejudice toward immigrants. This is a high-status group who discriminate and oppress an immigrant minority—a phenomenon which has become commonplace in Europe. Their results show that prejudice is somewhat elevated when the high-status group feels deprived, compared with the control condition—a finding that confirms the widespread assumption that threat is a key factor in oppression. However, those who feel gratified (i.e., whose perspectives are improving) are especially prejudiced. The authors thus found a curvilinear association between deprivation–control–gratification and prejudice, which they refer to as the “v-curve hypothesis.”

Later research suggested that in-group identification plays a role in this process (Damburn et al., 2006). The effect of identification could be consistent with various explanations: People who are highly identified with their privilege may have a greater sense of entitlement (Blumer, 1958), or a stronger need to positively differentiate their in-group through discrimination (Turner & Brown, 1978). Alternatively, we propose that the prospect of attaining a privileged position also triggers strategic considerations, such that those who anticipate joining the privileged elite in the future are more likely to attune their behaviors, intentions, and expressions to the norms of their prospective in-group. If such norms are hostile toward immigrants this could potentially explain the v-curve effect.⁶ This article presents two studies that test this hypothesis.

Overview of the Present Research

Based on the studies of Guimond and Damburn (2002), Study 1 compared a no-feedback control condition with manipulations of whether university students

⁶Indeed, there are indications that such hostile norms existed in all contexts in which the v-curve has been found thus far. This is elaborated in the discussion.

expect their future prospects to be better than expected. Study 2 examined the full factorial design, allowing a test of the v-curve hypothesis (relative gratification vs. relative deprivation vs. control).

To examine the hypothesis that oppressive intent may be at least partly strategic, we manipulated the norms of participants' prospective in-group.⁷ We know from the group socialization literature (e.g., Moreland & Levine, 1982) that new members are more keen to display "good citizenship" by adhering to group norms. Both studies therefore manipulated the norm of the privileged elite that these students might one day belong to. In Study 1, the manipulated norm was one of benevolence versus selfishness. Study 2 manipulated anti- versus proimmigration norms. The key dependent variables focused on oppressive intent and included support for anti-immigration policies and anti-immigration action intentions. Control variables that were included to test for alternative explanations were social dominance orientation (cf. Guimond & Dambrun, 2002) and entitlement (Blumer, 1958). Predictions were that the v-curve hypothesis would be confirmed only when the group norms of the elite were selfish. In other words, the content of group norms of a prospective in-group would moderate the effect of relative gratification on oppressive action intentions.

Study 1

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 150 undergraduates ($M_{\text{age}} = 19.8$, $SD = 2.18$, 83 females), randomly allocated to conditions. All participants were British students at Exeter University. The study had a 2 (norm: selfish vs. benevolent toward immigrants) \times 2 (prospects: relatively gratified vs. no feedback control) between-participants factorial design.

Independent variables and procedure. In order to manipulate independent variables, the experiment ostensibly consisted of three separate studies. The first two surreptitiously manipulated the norm and social prospects, respectively. Participants were told that the "first study" was about politics in Britain and differences between rich and poor. To manipulate the norm, participants were given fictional feedback about "affluent people, with influence and advantage over others." They were told that these affluent people either do (or do not) "Use their wealth and status as a way of helping those less fortunate than themselves." They were given three examples to support this statement, one of which was germane to

⁷Manipulating the norms of the prospective group rather than the in-group has the considerable advantage that one can test the hypothesis that this is strategic behavior, because all rewards of such behavior are anticipated in the future.

immigrants. This was designed to manipulate the norm that privileged people are either selfish or benevolent toward immigrants. Participants were asked to respond to a manipulation check embedded in a series of questions about politics.

The feedback materials for "Study 2" manipulated prospects. It stated that, "A recent survey . . . has found that students graduating from Exeter University now have the same job prospects as Oxbridge graduates." Participants were also asked to examine a graph which showed the projected income of Exeter graduates overtaking that of Oxbridge graduates (traditionally higher status) and rising significantly above that of graduates from lower status universities. In the control condition, no such feedback was provided. Participants were asked to respond to a manipulation check item, embedded among a few questions about student prospects. Participants then continued onto the "third study," which consisted of a questionnaire. Finally, participants were fully debriefed.

Dependent measures. Dependent measures were in the form of statements with which participants indicated agreement (1 = *disagree strongly*, 7 = *agree strongly*). The manipulation check for the norm was "In Britain today, rich people believe they ought to do their best to help others." The manipulation check for prospects was "I think that the prospects for Exeter University students are improving over time." The main dependent measure was a 4-item anti-immigration policy scale ($\alpha = .75$) adapted from Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) and included the items, "Send back only those immigrants who do not make an economic contribution to this country," "Send back only those immigrants who have broken the law and committed serious offences," "Send back only those immigrants who do not have a legal right to be in Britain," and "The government should not send back any immigrants" (reverse-coded). Also included (for control purposes) were a Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) scale (6 items, $\alpha = .75$) adapted from Sidanius and Pratto (1999; $\alpha = .71$), containing the items, "If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems," "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups," "It is probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom," "It would be good if all groups could be equal but this would not be practically possible," and the reverse-coded items, "We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally," and "Group equality should be our ideal."

In addition, a 4-item scale ($\alpha = .83$) of social entitlement of the British in-group over immigrants was included, "The British ought to have priority in matters of employment," "The British are entitled to have priority over immigrants in receiving social security benefits," "The British ought to have priority in matters of government housing," and "Immigrants in Britain should have the right to vote" (reverse-coded).

Finally, a 4-item scale measured *identification with Britain* ($\alpha = .87$). Items were, "I identify strongly with traditional British beliefs and values," "Being

British is an important aspect of my identity,” “I feel a sense of pride when I think about Britain and British history,” and “I identify with Britain.”

Results and Discussion

Manipulation checks. Results were analyzed with 2×2 ANOVAs. Checks indicated that both manipulations were successful. The norm check, $F(1, 144) = 3.54, p = .06, \eta^2 = .02$, showed participants thought the rich were more benevolent in that condition ($M = 3.97, SD = 1.23$) than in the selfish norm condition ($M = 3.61, SD = 1.19$). There was also a significant social prospects main effect on prospects check, $F(1, 139) = 3.90, p = .05, \eta^2 = .03$, with greater endorsement that prospects were good in the relatively gratified condition ($M = 5.27, SD = .96$) than in the control condition ($M = 4.92, SD = 1.15$).

Condition effects. On the anti-immigration policy scale, there were no main effects, norm $F(1, 137) = 0.06, p = .81$; prospects $F(1, 137) = 1.38, p = .24$. However, the predicted 2-way interaction was significant, $F(1, 137) = 5.20, p = .02, \eta^2 = .04$ (Figure 1). Further analyses showed that only when supported by a selfish in-group norm was there greater anti-immigration political intent when participants were relatively gratified ($M = 5.11, SD = 1.11$) than in the control condition ($M = 4.35, SD = 1.34$), $F(1, 137) = 5.78, p = .02, \eta^2 = .04$. When the norm was benevolent, there was no difference between the gratified ($M = 4.56$,

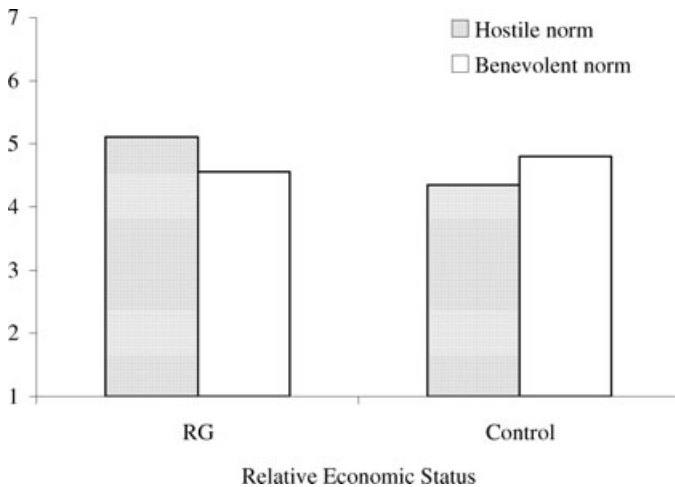


Fig. 1. Effects of anticipated relative economic status (gratification versus control) on support for anti-immigrant policies depend on the elite’s norms.

$SD = 1.48$) and control ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.25$) conditions, $F(1, 137) = 0.63$, $p = .43$. Within the gratified condition, the difference between norm conditions was marginally significant, $F(1, 137) = 3.06$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Within the no feedback control condition, there was no effect of norms, $F(1, 137) = 2.16$, $p = .14$.

This result is consistent with predictions. In the selfish norm condition, we replicated previous research that participants who had prospects to improve their station in life displayed more prejudice (Guimond & Dambrun, 2002) and had clear intent to oppress the immigrant out-group. This is especially noteworthy given that such positive expectations of future gratification should reduce any economic or socioevolutionary need for competition. However, this effect occurred only in the condition where the norms of the prospective in-group encouraged such actions. When these norms were more benevolent, in contrast, there was no significant effect of relative gratification.

Further analyses explored effects on potential process variables. A multivariate 2×2 ANOVA was conducted on responses to the scales which measured SDO, entitlement, and British identification (Table 1). None of the multivariate effects was significant, nor were any of the univariate effects. For SDO, there was neither a norm main effect, $F(1, 138) = 1.44$, $p = .23$, nor a social prospects main effect, $F(1, 138) = .43$, $p = .51$, nor a 2-way interaction, $F(1, 138) = 0.01$, $p = .94$. This was also the case for entitlement: there was no norm main effect, $F(1, 138) = 0.04$, $p = .85$, no social prospects main effect, $F(1, 138) = 1.56$, $p = .21$, and no 2-way interaction, $F(1, 138) = .07$, $p = .80$. Finally, there was no significant norm main effect, $F(1, 138) = 0.18$, $p = .67$, no social prospects main effect, $F(1, 138) = .46$, $p = .50$, nor a 2-way interaction, $F(1, 138) = 0.13$, $p = .72$, for British identification.

Table 1. Means in the Selfish ($N = 72$) and Benevolent Norm ($N = 70$) Conditions for Relatively Gratified ($N = 68$) and Control ($N = 74$) Participants

		Selfish Norm		Benevolent Norm	
		RG	Control	RG	Control
Support for anti-immigration policies	<i>M</i>	5.11	4.35	4.56	4.80
	<i>SD</i>	1.11	1.34	1.48	1.25
SDO	<i>M</i>	2.73	2.85	2.96	3.11
	<i>SD</i>	1.13	1.28	1.32	1.07
British identification	<i>M</i>	4.86	4.93	4.67	4.92
	<i>SD</i>	1.37	1.27	1.53	1.46
Entitlement	<i>M</i>	4.42	4.17	4.53	4.16
	<i>SD</i>	1.45	1.72	1.14	1.16

Note. A higher score indicates a greater propensity on each measure.

In sum, the process variables did not show any significant effects. Although we confirmed the main hypothesis, some residual questions remained. We conducted a follow-up that improved the design in two ways: one was to add a relative deprivation condition, so that we could test the full v-curve hypothesis. The second was to make the prospective in-group norms more specific to immigrants: this would allow for a more precise test of predictions (and should boost power because the normative incentive is more targeted).

Study 2

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 147 ($M_{\text{age}} = 20.95$, $SD = 2.29$, 100 female) undergraduate volunteers. All were British students at Exeter University. The design was between subjects: 2 (norm: prejudiced toward immigrants vs. no norm control) \times 3 (social prospects: relative gratification [RG] vs. no feedback control vs. relative deprivation [RD]). Participants were randomly assigned to conditions.

Procedure and independent variables. The procedure was similar to Study 1 in most respects. The norm manipulation was very similar, but the content of the feedback about the privileged group's attitudes was specific to immigrants. Thus, participants received fictional feedback that a "Recent survey by the government body *National Statistics*, regarding attitudes toward immigration" found significantly higher levels of concern about immigration among those who were on higher salaries. They also heard that research has found that affluent jurors were most likely to find Black defendants guilty. The third piece of research ostensibly showed that "The decline of the corner shop" was due to "the mistrust . . . in those areas . . . of shops and businesses that are run by people of a different ethnic background." Participants in the control condition were not provided with feedback about the norm.

The prospects manipulation was as in Study 1, except that a third condition was added, in which feedback showed that Exeter earnings were decreasing relative to Oxbridge (relative deprivation). The rest of the procedure was identical to Study 1.

Dependent measures. Two items were manipulation checks for the social prospects manipulation, "Exeter University students have good job opportunities compared with students from Oxford and Cambridge" and "Compared with the prospects for students from Cambridge and other top universities, the prospects for Exeter graduates are improving over time."

The main dependent variables were measured using standardized 7-point scales (1 = *Do not agree at all*, 7 = *Agree completely*). Three measures

assessed participants' support for anti-immigrant policies and practices. We used the same anti-immigration policy scale as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .68$) but selected the more harsh policies only, to send back: "... all immigrants [...], including those who were born in Britain," "[...] only those immigrants who were not born in Britain," and "[...] only those immigrants who do not have a legal right to be in Britain." The second scale measured support for anti-immigrant prejudicial practices. This was measured through an adapted scale of generalized prejudice (Guimond & Damburn, 2002; $\alpha = .62$), retaining five items that reflect support for hostile actions and policies toward immigrants, for example, "I cannot understand violence toward ethnic minorities" (recoded) and "Immigration laws should be more stringent." A final 6-item scale measured support for ethnocentric practices ($\alpha = .82$): "Immigrants' primary loyalty should be with the country they have moved to," "Immigrants should be made to learn English," "Immigrants should promise allegiance to the country they move to," "The number of immigrants who are granted asylum should be reduced," "The sheer number of immigrants that are legally allowed to stay is a major problem," and "Immigrants should not be given responsibility or positions of authority over the British."

The same SDO scale was used as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .71$). A 4-item entitlement scale ($\alpha = .80$, see Study 1) was also included. Finally, British identification was measured as potential process variable (see Study 1, $\alpha = .87$).

Results and Discussion

Manipulation checks. A 2×3 ANOVA on the first manipulation check showed a main effect of social prospects, as predicted, $F(2, 141) = 8.57, p = .001, \eta^2 = .11$. Highest scores were found in the gratified condition ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.24$) and lowest in the deprived condition ($M = 3.61, SD = 1.48$). Responses to the second check which measured improvements over time also showed a significant prospects main effect, $F(2, 141) = 4.88, p = .01, \eta^2 = .07$. The mean in the relatively gratified condition was again the highest ($M = 4.98, SD = 1.41$) and the relatively deprived condition the lowest ($M = 4.14, SD = 1.42$). These results suggest that the social prospects variable was successfully manipulated.

Condition effects. First, we report the results of a multivariate 2×3 ANOVA, which is followed by tests of the specific hypothesis (v-curve). Please refer to Table 2 for means. A multivariate analysis across the three measures of support for anti-immigrant policies and practices indicated there were significant main effects of group norm, $F(3, 139) = 4.42, p = .005$, and of prospects, $F(3, 140) = 6.03, p = .001$, as well as a trend for the interaction to be significant, $F(3, 140) = 2.47, p = .07$.

Table 2. Means in the Prejudiced Norm ($N = 70$) and No Norm Control ($N = 77$) Conditions for Relatively Gratiated ($N = 52$), Control ($N = 51$) and Relatively Deprived ($N = 44$) Participants

		Prejudiced Norm			No Norm Control		
		RG	Control	RD	RG	Control	RD
Support for:							
Anti-immigration policies	<i>M</i>	4.03 _a	2.97 _b	2.89 _b	3.27 _b	3.12 _b	2.74 _b
	<i>SD</i>	1.34	.64	1.03	1.43	.99	1.11
Prejudicial treatment	<i>M</i>	4.76 _a	3.64 _b	4.26 _{ab}	3.85 _b	3.71 _b	3.62 _b
	<i>SD</i>	1.01	.85	1.43	.95	.89	.87
Ethnocentric policies	<i>M</i>	4.90 _a	3.99 _b	4.51 _{ab}	3.70 _b	3.75 _b	3.83 _b
	<i>SD</i>	1.30	.92	1.69	1.30	1.05	1.00
Entitlement	<i>M</i>	4.35	3.91	4.58	3.75	3.66	3.57
	<i>SD</i>	1.27	1.22	1.40	1.39	1.65	1.38
SDO	<i>M</i>	2.90	2.82	2.83	2.89	2.44	2.72
	<i>SD</i>	.96	.79	.94	.86	.86	1.01
British identification	<i>M</i>	5.72 _c	4.84 _{bc}	4.39 _{ab}	4.51 _{ab}	3.67 _a	5.25 _{bc}
	<i>SD</i>	.94	1.64	1.27	.86	1.70	1.50

Note. A higher score indicates a greater propensity on each measure. Means with different subscripts differ significantly from each other according to Student–Newman–Keuls post hoc comparisons, $p < .05$. If no subscripts are given, there are no significant differences.

Tests of hypotheses: the moderated v-curve. We conducted tests of the v-curve hypothesis using contrasts in a one-way ANOVA (e.g., Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1985). The hypotheses addressed in these analyses are (1) whether there was an overall between-condition difference, (2) whether there was overall support for the moderated v-curve hypothesis. This was tested with a contrast specifying the predicted v-curve in the prejudiced norm conditions (RG, control and RD condition contrast: 2 –1 2), and a “flat line” no difference pattern in the control norm condition (–1 –1 –1). (3) Whether the v-curve was significant in the prejudiced norm conditions, and (4) whether there was any support for a v-curve in the nonprejudiced control norm conditions (prediction being that the pattern would not be found in this condition).

For support of anti-immigration policies, the overall between-conditions difference was highly significant, $F(5, 141) = 3.77, p = .003, \eta^2 = .12$, confirming hypothesis 1. There was also significant support for hypothesis 2: the contrast which tested the entire predicted pattern of a moderated v-curve was significant, $F(1, 141) = 4.58, p = .03, \eta^2 = .03$. More specific tests of Hypotheses 3 and 4, respectively, showed that there was trend toward a v-curve in the prejudiced norm condition, $F(1, 141) = 3.03, p = .08, \eta^2 = .02$, but not in the control norm condition, $F(1, 141) = 0.33, ns, \eta^2 = .00$. Closer inspection of the means (Figure 2)

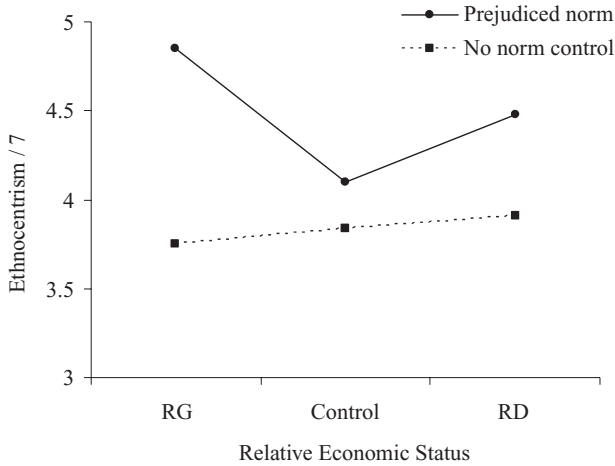


Fig. 2. Effects of anticipated relative economic status (gratification vs. control vs. deprivation) on support for ethnocentric policies depend on the elite’s social norms: The moderated “v-curve.”

reveals that the v-curve in the prejudiced norm conditions did not completely hold up because, contrary to expectations, there was no significant increase of support for anti-immigrant policies when participants felt deprived. The prediction of an elevated level of support for anti-immigrant policies in the gratification condition was upheld.

With regard to the participants’ support for prejudicial practices, all hypotheses were confirmed. The overall between-groups difference was significant, $F(5, 141) = 4.65, p = .004, \eta^2 = .14$. Moreover, the overall test of the predicted contrast was highly significant, too, $F(1, 141) = 19.80, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$. As predicted by hypotheses 3 and 4, there was a significant “v-curve” in the prejudiced norm condition, $F(1, 141) = 11.90, p = .001, \eta^2 = .08$, but not in the control norm condition, $F(1, 141) = 0.24, ns, \eta^2 = .00$.

For ethnocentrism, all hypotheses were also confirmed. The overall between-groups difference was significant, $F(5, 141) = 3.70, p = .004, \eta^2 = .12$, as was the test of the predicted contrast, $F(1, 141) = 12.53, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$. There was a significant “v-curve” in the prejudiced norm condition, $F(1, 141) = 5.48, p = .02, \eta^2 = .08$, but not in the control norm condition, $F(1, 141) = 0.34, ns, \eta^2 = .00$. Results on these three variables, overall, replicated and extended the findings of Study 1 as predicted, although the effects in the relative deprivation condition appeared to be somewhat smaller than before.

For SDO and entitlement, the tests of the hypotheses faltered at Step 1. There was no overall between-condition difference either for SDO, $F(5, 140) = 0.95, ns, \eta^2 = .03$, or for entitlement, $F(5, 141) = 1.95, p = .09, \eta^2 = .06$.

For British identification, finally, the overall between-groups difference was highly significant, $F(5, 141) = 6.75, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$. The predicted contrast was also significant, $F(1, 141) = 3.98, p = .048, \eta^2 = .03$. The trend for the “v-curve” was marginally significant in the prejudiced norm condition, $F(1, 141) = 2.76, p = .09, \eta^2 = .02$. Contrary to expectations, the “v-curve” pattern was highly significant in the control norm condition, $F(1, 141) = 13.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$. Inspection of the means reveals that identification was significantly lower in the condition in which participants were not given any information about prospects.

Mediation. In order to investigate the process behind the moderated v-curve pattern, we examined whether the relation between predicted between-condition differences (the moderated v-curve hypothesis) and dependent measures was mediated by British identification (cf. Dambrun et al., 2006). First, the condition contrast (Hypothesis 2, above) led to more identification, $\beta = .18, p = .045$. Second, analyses of the direct effect confirmed that there was a significant relationship between the condition contrast and support for anti-immigration policies, $\beta = .14, p = .046$. When support for anti-immigrant policies was regressed on the condition contrast and British identification simultaneously, only the relationship between identification and support was significant, $\beta = .23, p < .001$; the relationship between the condition code and support became non-significant, $\beta = .10, ns$. The bootstrap confidence interval revealed the indirect effect of identification to be significant (.0033 to 0.0879). This provides evidence that identification mediated the effect of condition on support.

Support for prejudicial treatment revealed a similar direct effect, $\beta = .27, p < .001$. When support was regressed on condition contrast and British identification simultaneously, the relationship between identification and support was significant, $\beta = .15, p = .009$. Although the relationship between the condition code and support was somewhat attenuated, it remained significant, $\beta = .24, p < .001$. The bootstrap confidence interval revealed that the indirect effect of identification was not significant (–.0001 to 0.0623). There was no evidence that identification mediated the effect of condition on support for prejudicial treatment.

Finally, a mediation analysis of support for ethnocentric treatment also revealed a direct effect, $\beta = .30, p < .001$. When support was regressed on condition contrast and British identification simultaneously, the relationship between identification and support was significant, $\beta = .33, p < .001$, and the relationship between condition and support was attenuated, though still significant, $\beta = .24, p < .001$. The bootstrap confidence interval revealed that the indirect effect of identification was significant (.0049 to 0.1248). Thus, identification mediated the effect of condition on support for ethnocentric treatment.

In sum, identification mediated (at least partially) the effect for two out of three key dependent variables and can thus be said to play a key role, as hypothesized

by Dambrun et al. (2006). Such identification effects are, of course, completely consistent with a social identity interpretation of these effects, which would suggest that an increase in status through gratification (as well as an increase in threat through deprivation) can affect identification and concurrently affect normative behavior. The fact that identification did not mediate in Study 1 could have been caused by the slightly different manipulation of group norms: In the present study, this emphasized the intergroup dimension explicitly and this may explain why national identification effects were found (rather than, for instance, identification with the elite).

General Discussion

Results of two studies show that the “v-curve effect” demonstrated by Guimond and Dambrun (2002) is moderated by the content of the prospective in-group’s norm. In both studies there was more hostility toward immigrants (support for anti-immigrant policies in both studies, support for prejudicial treatment and ethnocentric policies in Study 2) when participants anticipated future gratification—that is, when their future prospects were good, and when there was less chance of economic competition from immigrants. Study 2 also showed some evidence to suggest that anticipated deprivation increased such hostility, although this was a much less consistent and strong pattern.

Importantly, however, there was no evidence to support the v-curve hypothesis when the norms of the elite (the prospective in-group, for those who expected future gratification) were neutral. The strong evidence for the v-curve only emerged when the elite condoned hostility. When we examine other research that has reported a v-curve, it could reasonably be argued that the elites under observation there were also hostile toward the low-status groups: studies focused on French elites (Guimond & Dambrun, 2002) and South African elites (Dambrun et al., 2006), both of which have a reputation for hostility toward immigrants. The third v-curve was demonstrated among the White residents of a segregated 1960s town in Midwest United States that experienced racial tensions (Grofman & Muller, 1973), another context in which hostility toward African Americans was overt.

The design of the studies ensured that the gratification that participants were confronted with was anticipated (as was the case in Grofman & Muller, 1973; Guimond & Dambrun, 2002). Coupled with the manipulation of social norms for the elite only (i.e., for the prospective in-group of gratified participants) this makes for a strong test of the hypothesis that there are not just intragroup processes at work here, but that the motives of participants were strategic with respect to future prospects. In the gratified condition (Studies 1 and 2) participants in effect expressed support for the actions that they believed their prospective in-group to be responsible for. They thus adapted their personal preferences to suit the expectations of their future station in life.

It should be emphasized that this support was expressed in private toward the experimenters only, making it unlikely that this was a mere compliance effect, and more likely that it was either willing conformity to a behavioral pattern that was consistent with the entry into a new group, or strategic self-presentation (Moreland & Levine, 1982). It is important to note too that identification partially mediated the effects in Study 2 (as in Dambrun et al., 2006), but that it did not in Study 1. This is relevant because high identifiers should be most prone to willingly conform to the norms of the prospective in-group. This (coupled with the lack of any entitlement effects) provides further (indirect) support for the idea that strategic factors could have been responsible for these effects.

But irrespective of whether this endorsement of intergroup hostility was the result of purely strategic processes, or reflective of some “real” normative influence of the in-group, it is clear that the present results are far removed from the intergroup considerations that are traditionally considered the predictors of oppression in theories of intergroup relations. There is no evidence that people support hostile actions toward immigrants merely because of a sense of threat. In fact, effects in relative deprivation condition (Study 2) were not showing consistent increases in hostility, compared with a control condition. There was no evidence either that potential process variables identified by other theories (SDO, entitlement) played a prominent role. Instead, it is very clear that intragroup factors such as norms and individuals’ (strategic) responses to them are of central importance (see also Amiot & Bourhis, 2005; Smith & Postmes, 2009).

There is strong evidence for the claim that intragroup processes are at work because both studies directly manipulated norms of the prospective in-group. It is worth noting that such manipulations of the process variable provide more direct and incontrovertible evidence of causality than mediation with measured process variables does. Methodological issues for future research would be to facilitate generalization to actual intergroup behavior by inclusion of a broader range of dependent variables. Needless to say, measurement of actual oppressive behavior is ethically dubious, but the generalizability of present findings to real-life oppression would be easier if future research could focus on certain mild forms of hostility or concrete intentions to engage in them.

Implications and Conclusions

The present research shows that acts of oppression need not be motivated by intergroup factors such as conflict and threat, nor do they necessarily feed on cognitive precursors such as pervasive prejudice or hostile stereotypes. Instead, the results underline the importance of the intragroup dimension of intergroup behavior. Oppression occurs because individuals act strategically to achieve certain objectives within (or with) the in-group. This finding affirms that oppression is indeed genuine collective behavior in the sense that it is grounded in processes of social influence and collective co-ordination of actions. However, it also

underlines the importance of considering the intergroup and intragroup dimension of collective action in interaction with each other. Indeed, as argued elsewhere, the present-day hostility toward immigrants appears to be driven primarily by intragroup processes (Smith & Postmes, 2008), and the aims of their oppression consequently have less to do with keeping them down, so much as advancing the positions of particular subgroups within the high-status majority (see also Morton, Postmes, & Jetten, 2007).

There are practical implications of the present research in its optimistic outlook on the amelioration of intergroup relations. Far from being an inevitable outcome of threatened status or entrenched entitlement, the present results suggest that patterns of oppression are highly responsive to in-group norms (see also Smith & Postmes, 2009). Such norms, however, are highly permeable and changeable: There is considerable evidence that practitioners can do a lot to change group norms in general (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Hostile norms and stereotypes are similarly subject to intragroup social influences (Haslam, 1997; Postmes et al., 2005). A key role in this process of norm change is played by the intragroup dynamics of high-status groups: to challenge the legitimacy of inequity and to encourage debate about this within the high-status group would appear to be a positive first step toward the eradication of oppression.

In conclusion, the prime concern of the collective action literature tends to be with low-status groups' actions. Among high-status groups, the assumed drivers of collective action tend to be individual and "group-level" (or intergroup) factors. At the individual level, the concern is with factors such as prejudice or social dominance orientation. At the intergroup level the concern is with the impact of intergroup threat, and with psychological processes of justice, efficacy and identity. In the present article, we advance the idea that it is also important to attend to the "intermediate" level of intragroup processes, because this is likely to be the source of profound influences to support and initiate oppressive actions. We also propose that it may be worthwhile, in future research, to examine a broader range of oppressive actions than institutionalized and pervasive exclusion alone. A study of a broad spectrum of oppressive actions is likely to reveal that in addition to individual and intergroup factors, there are various strategic reasons for participation in collective action, both at an intergroup (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995) and an intragroup level. Such strategic and intragroup factors are more likely to play a key role in high-status groups: Among the privileged, actions that benefit the group tend to also be beneficial for more personal reasons.

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