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Helping to improve the group stereotype: On the strategic dimension of pro-social
behavior

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Abstract

In three studies we consider a basis for inter-group helping. Specifically we show that group members may help others in order to disconfirm a stereotype of their own group as mean. Study one shows that Scots believe they are seen as mean by the English, resent this stereotype, are motivated to refute it, and believe out-group helping is a particularly effective way of doing so. Study two shows that increasing the salience of the English stereotype of the Scottish as mean leads Scots to accentuate the extent to which Scots are depicted as generous. Study three shows that increasing the salience of the stereotype of the Scots as mean results in an increase in the help volunteered to out-group members. These results highlight how strategic concerns may result in out-group helping. In turn, they underscore the point that helping others may be a means to advance a group's interest.

Helping to improve the group stereotype: On the strategic dimension of pro-social behavior

“Nothing in human nature is so God-like as the disposition to do good to our fellow creatures”. In these words, the novelist Samuel Richardson (writing in 1742) sums up a common assumption about helping: pro-social behavior reflects an underlying pro-social impulse. That is, we help out of a desire to do good to others and we refrain from helping when dispositions or circumstances dull that desire. However, a wealth of anthropological analyses of gift exchange (e.g., Malinowski, 1922; Mauss 1907/1957) show the giving of goods or services can reflect other motivations. For example, Mauss describes customs of giving that are less to do with helping others and more to do with demonstrating one clan’s superiority over others in a local group hierarchy.

Such analyses alert us to the point that acts of giving may be inter-group in nature and need to be analysed through reference to the inter-group relations within which they take place. This logic is illustrated in recent social psychological research by Nadler and Halabi (Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). They show that members of a powerful group may provide help to members of powerless groups as a means of maintaining the dependency of their subordinates. Equally, members of powerless groups may reject help from powerful groups especially when they are challenging inter-group inequalities. The wider implication is that helping can be grounded less in a desire to alleviate the plight of the recipient than in an attempt to improve the lot of the donor. It does not always reveal a ‘God-like’ disposition.

This paper explores further the group interests that inter-group helping may service. We seek to show that helping others – especially out-group others – may be increased where group members wish to ameliorate the perceptions held about one’s group by others. Specifically, we explore whether telling Scots that the English consider them to be mean results in increased helping towards representatives of a third-party national out-group (the Welsh). Before explaining the context to our studies and our hypotheses, we outline the grounds for studying helping as a group phenomenon and then consider the strategic side of group behavior.

Helping as a group process

From its inception, helping research addressed collective phenomena. Much attention focused on the idea that the larger the group, the greater the diffusion of responsibility such that each individual feels less obligation to act (Latané & Nida, 1981). Yet, from early on, it was clear that the presence of fellow bystanders can, under certain conditions, increase intervention, especially when other bystanders help (Bryan & Test, 1967). What seems critical is the extent to which people see themselves as belonging to a common social group (Darley, Teger and Lewis, 1973; Horowitz, 1971; Rutkowski, Gruder & Romer, 1983). Where they do, they will be influenced by the actions of their fellows, whether in the direction of intervention or non-intervention. Where they don’t, the actions of one bystander will have little impact upon that of others (Levine, Cassidy, Brazier & Reicher, 2002). In short, what matters is not so much whether bystanders constitute a physical group but rather whether they constitute a psychological group (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987), and, if they are a psychological

group, whether their norms support or oppose intervention (Horowitz, 1971; Rutkowski et al., 1983).

A similar argument can be made concerning the relationship between bystanders and victims. People are more likely to feel concern for those seen as belonging to the same group as themselves and hence are more likely to help them (Dovidio, Gaertner, Validizic, Matoka, Johnson & Frazier, 1997; Levine, et al., 2002; Sturmer, Snyder & Omoto, 2005). What is more, when the boundaries of in-group inclusion are drawn more broadly we become more inclusive in terms of who we will help (Levine, Prosser, Evans & Reicher, 2005).

Work on the psychology of volunteerism shows the importance of common group membership is not limited to face-to face-helping but extends to broader forms of social solidarity. The more that people identify with a particular community the more they are likely to volunteer for organizations which provide support for that community (Simon, Sturmer and Steffens, 2000). Such collective action may have greater impact than individual interventions in cases of emergency. For example, whereas acts of individual bravery undoubtedly saved individual Jews from the Nazi holocaust the large-scale collective mobilizations in countries such as Bulgaria saved many more (Genov & Baeva, 2003). Analysis of the key documents addressed to the Bulgarian population shows that both definitions of shared group membership and in-group norms were important in the rescue of Bulgarian Jews (Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins & Levine, 2006; Todorov, 2001). Jewish people were consistently construed as a Bulgarian (in-group) minority rather than a religious or ethnic out-group and Bulgarian identity was associated with norms opposing oppression.

There is therefore archival, survey and experimental research demonstrating the theoretical and practical importance of group processes for helping. This evidence shows how the cognitive salience of category membership and category content affects the support we give to others.

The strategic side of group helping

Reicher et al. (2006) identify one further argument used to promote the rescue of Bulgarian Jews: if Bulgaria wished to be regarded as a ‘civilized nation’ it could not be complicit in mass slaughter. This argument has less to do with defining the boundaries to in-group inclusion and group norms, and more to do with advancing group interests. It therefore fits with a growing literature stressing the need to consider the strategic dimension to group action (see Klein et al, in press; Reicher, Spears and Postmes, 1995). Of particular interest is the idea that actors may seek to induce others to see their group as they themselves wish it to be seen. For example, Klein & Azzi (2001) show that group members, when confronted with an out-group depiction of their in-group will confirm positive aspects of this stereotype yet disconfirm the negative aspects.

Our work develops this logic. It explores how group helping behaviors may be a way of responding to specific types of perceived negative out-group stereotypes (in saying this, we do not dispute that there may be other ways of doing so, but our concern here is to do with meta-stereotype disconfirmation as a basis for helping and not with the bases of meta-stereotype disconfirmation *per se*). While helping has positive moral connotations which may serve to ameliorate negative out-group stereotypes in general, we expect that the meanings associated with such actions will be particularly effective in

disconfirming stereotypes that portray the in-group as having specific anti-social characteristics: being selfish or egocentric. This is not to say that there may not be other ways of disconfirming such stereotypes. Our point is rather that one reason that people help is to demonstrate their generosity to doubting others. In turn this implies that people are likely to help more when confronted with such out-group doubts.

Furthermore, we suggest that the motive to disconfirm ‘mean’ stereotypes of the in-group impacts specifically upon out-group helping – something of particular note since the group processes discussed above impact uniquely on help accorded to other in-group members. This difference is because help, as we conceptualise it here, is an act of communication which means that we must consider the communicational value of different forms of helping. Thus, helping “one’s own” is weakly diagnostic of a group’s qualities: such help is to be expected from any group and can easily be construed as selfish and sectarian. By contrast, helping out-group members is more noteworthy and diagnostic. This is readily apparent in the biblical parable of ‘The Good Samaritan’ in which a Samaritan helps a Levite at a time when Samaritans were regarded by Jews as a rival ethnic out-group. That the act of helping depicted here is inter-group is crucial to the parable’s power. Such helping is unexpected and cannot be dismissed as an example of group members simply looking after ‘their own’.

Drawing these points together, we propose that out-group helping may be used to challenge negative out-group stereotypes in general and “mean” hetero-stereotypes in particular. We predict that, where group members are made aware that a significant out-group stereotypes them as mean, they will emphasize their helpfulness, specifically through increasing levels of helping to a third party out-group. However, not all group

members will be equally motivated to act in this way. How people respond to negative characterizations of their group (and other threats to collective identity) depends upon their degree of group identification, with high identifiers being more motivated to act in ways that defend/promote the in-group (Branscome, Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999). It therefore follows that our predicted effect should be greater amongst high identifiers.

The present research

Our research explores how the helping behavior of Scots is affected when their reputation for being mean is made salient. The stereotype of the Scots as mean is widespread and features as an illustrative example in Allport's 1954 classic "The Nature of Prejudice". 'A Scotsman who is penurious', he writes, 'delights us because he vindicates our prejudgement' (p. 22). This stereotype continues to have popular currency and continues to annoy Scottish people. This is well illustrated in the way Scots react to the jokes told about their meanness. For instance one website reports a number of such jokes and then retorts that Scots give more to registered charities per head of population than any other part of the UK ¹.

Throughout our research we also sought to capitalize on the inter-group relationship between the Scots and the English. Scotland and England are united in a single state, yet although Scots may define themselves as British, a Scottish identification remains potent and is bound up with inter-group comparisons with the (historically more powerful) English rival (Hopkins & Moore, 2001). Scots often complain that the English are arrogant and ignorant about their northern neighbors and resent the way they are

characterized (or more accurately, think they are characterized) by the English (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

In our research we encouraged our participants, who were young Scots, to reflect upon the Scottish-English relationship and the degree to which they are seen by the English as being mean. In the first Study, we investigated whether Scots believed themselves to be seen as mean by the English (that is we investigated what may be termed their meta-stereotype, see Vorauer, Main and O'Connell, 1998). We also investigated participants' beliefs about how they could refute this image. In the second Study, we manipulated the salience of an English stereotype of the Scots as mean and examined how this affected participants' depiction of the Scottish in-group. In the third, and main Study, we included a behavioral measure of helping and explored how in-group and out-group helping behavior was affected by manipulating the salience of an English stereotype of the Scots as mean. Our hypotheses (and the studies that address them) are as follows:

H1: Young Scots believe that they are viewed as mean by the English, believe that this stereotype not to be justified, are motivated to challenge the stereotype and believe that out-group helping is particularly effective in doing so (Study 1).

H2: The more the mean meta-stereotype is salient, the more Scots will seek to present the Scots as generous (Study 2) and (H2a), in particular, the more they will behave helpfully to a third-party out-group (Study 3).

Study 1

Introduction

This is a preliminary investigation to validate the assumptions underpinning our subsequent experimental studies. Following hypothesis 1 above, we wish to show, first, that Scots believe the English see them as mean, second that they see such a view as unwarranted, third that they are motivated to disconfirm it, and fourth, that they view out-group helping as more effective than in-group helping in disconfirming such a stereotype.

Method

Participants. Our aim in this Study is not to make a claim about the Scots in general and hence we do not seek a representative sample drawn from the Scottish population as a whole. Rather, we are concerned with the views of the samples from whom the participants in our experiments will be drawn – namely Scottish undergraduate students studying at a Scottish University. Hence this Study was conducted using twenty-six Scottish undergraduates studying at a Scottish University.

Materials. Participants completed a questionnaire which consisted of three elements. First, a number of traits were listed including, critically, “mean”, “tight-fisted”, “naïve” and “unrealistic”. For each trait, participants were asked to rate on a 10 point scale (anchored 1 = not at all and 10 = very much): “to what extent you think this is characteristic of Scots in general?” The ratings for the traits “mean” and “tight-fisted” were correlated ($r = .72$, $p = .001$) and averaged into a single score, as were the ratings for “naïve” and “unrealistic” ($r = .51$, $p = .01$). For each trait participants were also asked “to what extent you think non-Scots sometimes describe the Scots as being like this?”. The ratings for the traits “mean” and “tight-fisted” correlated ($r = .55$, $p = .004$) and were

averaged into a single score, as were the ratings for “naïve” and “unrealistic” ($r = .79$, $p = .001$).

Second, participants were given one of two scripts. Both purportedly described how the English perceive the Scots. One ($n = 12$) emphasised the meanness of the Scots (mean meta-stereotype salient), the other ($n=14$) focussed on alternative negative characteristics (mean meta-stereotype non-salient). After reading these texts participants were asked to rate on a 10 point scale (1 = not at all and 10 = very much): “To what extent do you think this is a fair and accurate description of the Scots?” and “If the English said the Scots were like this, would you feel like acting in ways that prove them wrong?”. The texts of the two scripts were as follows:

Mean meta-stereotype salient condition

The negative adjectives most commonly attributed to the Scots were “mean”, “ungenerous” and “tight-fisted”. Similar ideas were apparent in our interviews. Thus one English respondent argued that “perhaps it has to do with their history, I don’t know, but they seem to be an inward looking society which leads to an attitude of ‘well, I’ll look after myself and my own and let others look after themselves’”. Another said, “you can dress it up as being ‘careful’ or whatever but basically they are really mean with their money”. Another English respondent argued that the Scots were “amazingly hard-nosed” and that they were so bothered with “balancing the books they go to the mean-spirited, penny-pinching extreme”. She continued “everyone knows this - they just go to the extreme and that level of meanness is just silly: ask anyone.”

Mean meta-stereotype non-salient condition

The negative adjectives most commonly attributed to the Scots were “naïve”, “unrealistic” and “losers”. Similar ideas were apparent in our interviews. Thus one English respondent argued that “they’ve always had this unrealistic outlook - they squander time and money on romantic sounding schemes which never actually deliver what they are meant to”. Another said, “you can dress it up as being ‘romantic’ or whatever but basically they are losers who prefer easy gestures to the tough decisions that are needed to make things happen”. Yet another English respondent argued that the Scots were “amazingly naïve” and that they had no idea about the importance of such things as “ensuring what they want is practically possible - they go to the starry-eyed extreme”. She continued “everyone knows this - they just go to the extreme and that level of naivety is just silly: ask anyone.”

In the mean meta-stereotype salient condition participants also completed a third element of the questionnaire. This consisted of the question: “if you wanted to show English people that the stereotype of Scots as mean is unfair and untrue, what sort of behaviors do you think would be most likely to persuade them?” followed by six options, three relating to helping a Scot and three to helping a non-Scot (“Helping a fellow Scot/foreigner in distress”, “Giving money to a charity specifically for people in/outside Scotland”, “Giving up one’s time for a voluntary organization supporting Scots/non-Scots”). Each was rated on 10 point scales (1 = not at all to 10 = very much). The three items referring to helping in-group members were added together (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .52$),

as were the three items referring to out-group helping (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$). As the reliability of the in-group helping scale was weak we also constructed scales excluding the weakest item. The resultant 2-item scales (comprising the items referring to helping someone in distress and to giving to charity) were both reliable (in-group helping Cronbach $\alpha = .76$, out-group Cronbach $\alpha = .72$).

Results

In this study, as in the subsequent studies, all reported p values are two-tailed.

Trait ratings. Paired t -tests show that participants thought that non-Scots would see Scots as mean/tight-fisted ($M = 6.26$, $SD = 2.24$) more than they themselves would ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.85$), $t(24) = -5.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .56$. A similar but weaker pattern was found for the traits naïve/unrealistic. Participants thought that non-Scots would see Scots in these terms ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 2.55$) more than they themselves did ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.54$), $t(24) = -4.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .44$. When these data were analyzed in a 2 (Adjective type: mean/tight-fisted and naïve/unrealistic) \times 2 (Source of Judgment: self and non-Scots) ANOVA, the interaction was significant, $F(1, 24) = 6.98$, $p = .014$ ($\eta^2 = .23$) illustrating that the magnitude of the discrepancy between Scots auto- and meta-stereotypes was greater for the mean/tight-fisted dimension than the naïve/unrealistic dimension.

Reactions to the meta-stereotype. Participants saw both texts as moderately unfair descriptions of the Scots, and there was no difference between them in the degree to which they were rated as fair and accurate depictions (mean meta-stereotype non-salient $M = 4.57$, $SD = 2.03$ vs. salient $M = 3.83$, $SD = 2.76$, $t(24) = .79$, $p = .44$). Participants

were also quite motivated to prove that both stereotypes were inaccurate (mean meta-stereotype non-salient $\underline{M} = 5.50$, $\underline{SD} = 2.50$ vs. salient $\underline{M} = 6.42$, $\underline{SD} = 2.88$, $t(24) = -.87$, $p = .39$).

Refuting the meta-stereotype. When those in the mean meta-stereotype salient condition were asked what sort of behaviors could refute the image of the Scots as mean, scores on the 3-item scale showed that out-group helping ($\underline{M} = 7.11$, $\underline{SD} = 2.18$) would be more effective than in-group helping ($\underline{M} = 4.61$, $\underline{SD} = 1.63$), $t(11) = -3.10$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .47$. The same pattern was found on the 2-item scale (\underline{M} out-group helping = 7.08, $\underline{SD} = 2.19$, \underline{M} in-group helping = 4.33, $\underline{SD} = 2.00$), $t(11) = -3.21$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .48$. A similar pattern was found on the remaining item excluded from the 2-item scale, (\underline{M} giving time to a voluntary organization supporting non-Scots = 7.17, $\underline{SD} = 2.52$, \underline{M} giving time to a voluntary organization supporting Scots = 5.17, $\underline{SD} = 2.37$), $t(11) = -2.03$, $p = .067$, $\eta^2 = .27$.

Discussion

Three findings from this Study are of relevance for our subsequent investigations. First, young Scots do indeed believe that the English see them as mean. Second, they consider this stereotype to be unfair and are motivated to refute it. Third, they consider out-group helping to be more effective than in-group helping in refuting the mean stereotype.

This Study shows the mean meta-stereotype to be valid and that our sample believe it could be affected by (out-group) helping. What we need to show now is that

manipulating the salience of this meta-stereotype is consequential and does indeed impact on helping behaviors.

Study 2

Introduction

This Study examines the effects of making the mean meta-stereotype more or less salient to a sample akin to that used in Study 1. Our prediction (following H2 above) is that where the meta-stereotype is salient, young Scots will emphasize to the English that their group is helpful.

It is important at this juncture to make explicit a point which thus far has been implicit. We have argued that the relationship between meta-stereotypes and helping is based on a strategic process of communication whereby in-group members seek to shape what out-group members think of them. As such, the process is dependent upon the acts of the in-group being visible to the out-group. In order to achieve this we drew on the relationship between the experimenter and participants as a key feature of the experimental context (see Marques, Yzerbyt & Rijsman, 1988; Reicher & Levine, 1994). That is, in Study 2 (and Study 3 as well) the experimenter was English and stressed his interest in finding out what the Scots are like. The clear implication was that, in their responses, the Scots participants would be communicating with an influential representative of the English out-group. Hence the conditions are met for in-group members to use helping as a means of altering out-group stereotypes.

Method

Design. The Study had one between-subjects factor with two levels. The factor was salience of the mean meta-stereotype (salient vs. non-salient).

Participants. Thirty Scottish undergraduates attending a Scottish university completed one of two questionnaires. One of these failed to complete the answer booklet resulting in twenty-nine (8 males and 21 females) with usable returns (salient condition $n = 14$, non-salient condition $n = 15$).

Materials. Meta-stereotype salience was manipulated by getting people either to reflect on English-Scottish differences (inter-group comparison) or to reflect on how the English stereotype the Scots (meta-stereotype salient condition).

First, participants completed open-ended questions. In the inter-group comparison condition, participants listed three characteristics describing the English and three describing the Scottish. In the meta-stereotype salient condition participants listed three characteristics which they thought non-Scots commonly used to describe Scots. They also highlighted those they thought to be untrue or unfair.

Second, participants completed a trait-rating task. In the inter-group comparison condition participants rated the extent to which 11 adjectives applied to the English (rated on 7-point scales anchored 1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Six adjectives referred to working hard (“hardworking”, “industrious”, “productive”, “lazy” (reversed), “efficient” and “organized”) and five referred to being mean (“mean”, “tight-fisted”, “penny-pinching”, “generous” (reversed) and “stingy”). The items on both dimensions formed reliable scales (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$ and $.87$ respectively). In the meta-stereotype salient condition participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the English use these

same adjectives to characterize Scots. Again, the items on both the hard working and mean dimensions formed reliable scales (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$ and $.84$ respectively).

The open-ended questions and the rating scales constituted the independent variable. The dependent measures referred to the Scots' auto-stereotype and had two elements. First, participants rated the 11 adjectives again, but this time indicating how much they themselves thought the adjectives applied to Scots. Second, they answered the question: "per head of population, how much do you think Scots give to charity each year?". This had 9 responses altering in 5% increments from 20% less than the UK average to 20% more than the UK average. The mid-point was The same as the UK average. This question was designed to provide an opportunity to depict the in-group as generous and is not relevant to exploring the issue of the form of helping (i.e., in-group or out-group).

The questionnaire also contained questions concerning national identity (located at the questionnaire's beginning to increase the salience of participants' Scottishness). The items were: "This national identity is very important to me", "This nationality means little to me" (reversed), "I feel proud to have this nationality" and "This national identity has no emotional significance for me" (reversed) answered on 7-point scales (1 = disagree, 7 = agree). These items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$).

Procedure. The two versions of the questionnaire were distributed randomly amongst students attending a psychology practical class at a Scottish University. The class was run by an English lecturer (also the experimenter) whose accent was clearly English. He explained that the questionnaires were anonymous, but that the class (which included students from a number of other countries, including England) would explore

the results. Moreover, he stressed that these results would help his research concerning the nature of Scottish identity. In this way, the issue of national identity was made salient and it was made explicit that the responses of participants would be subject to out-group scrutiny.

The questionnaire took approximately fifteen minutes to complete. After all participants had completed the measures there was a full debriefing by the experimenter.

Results

Preliminary analyses. Overall participants generally identified very highly as Scots (on the 7-point scale, $M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.01$). It was marginally higher in the mean meta-stereotype non-salient condition than the salient condition ($M = 6.10$, $SD = .65$ vs. $M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.21$), $t(27) = 1.98$, $p = .059$.

Responses to the open-ended questions in the meta-stereotype salient condition confirmed the importance of the meanness dimension. Of the 14 participants 7 referred to the Scots being mean. Specifically, participants referred to the Scots reputation for being “tight-fisted” or “tight with money” (listed by four), “stingy” (listed by two) or “shrewd with money” (listed by one). One described the Scots as having a reputation for being generous. Of the 7 referring to the dimension of meanness, all reported that this was unfair, and it is noteworthy that two made spontaneous reference to Scottish charitable giving. One, referring to the Scots’ reputation for being “tight-fisted”, commented that this was “unfair and untrue! Generosity is shown a lot by Scottish people – especially for charity/aid”. The other commented “The shrewd with money characteristic is clearly a

myth as research has proven that Scottish people give more to charity than English people do”.

Further evidence as to the nature of the Scots meta-stereotype may be gained from inspecting the trait-rating data in the meta-stereotype condition. The scale means show that they thought the English would rate the Scots as moderately hardworking ($\underline{M} = 3.85$, $\underline{SD} = .81$) and rather mean ($\underline{M} = 4.56$, $\underline{SD} = 1.32$).

Scottish auto-stereotype. On the items related to working hard, there was no effect of condition (\underline{M} salient condition = 4.80, $\underline{SD} = .57$, \underline{M} non-salient condition = 4.92, $\underline{SD} = .68$; $t(27) = .53$, $p = .60$). Yet, as predicted, there was an effect of condition on the items related to being mean. The Scots were construed as less mean in the mean meta-stereotype salient condition ($\underline{M} = 2.19$, $\underline{SD} = .54$) than in the non-salient condition ($\underline{M} = 3.09$, $\underline{SD} = .94$), $t(22.6) = 3.20$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .31$.

Given that the differences in levels of identification between conditions approached significance the last analysis was repeated using identity scores as the covariate. Taking these scores into account served to strengthen the effect of condition upon the mean auto-stereotype ($F(1,26) = 14.58$, $p = 0.01$, $\eta p^2 = .36$) with the estimated marginal mean in the meta-stereotype salient condition being less ($\underline{M} = 2.08$) than in the non-salient condition ($\underline{M} = 3.19$).

The estimates of charitable giving were higher in the mean meta-stereotype salient condition ($\underline{M} = 6.57$, $\underline{SD} = 1.28$) than the non-salient condition ($\underline{M} = 5.33$, $\underline{SD} = 1.88$), $t(27) = -2.06$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2 = .14$. Again, this analysis was repeated in an ANCOVA taking the identity scores into account. As expected, the estimated marginal mean was higher when the meta-stereotype was salient ($M = 6.74$) than when it was not

($M = 5.18$) with this difference being rather stronger than before, $F(1,26) = 6.09$, $p = 0.02$, $\eta p^2 = .19$.

Discussion

These results support our hypothesis (H2) that, when the English meta-stereotype of Scots as mean is salient, Scots will seek to demonstrate that they are actually generous and helpful. They both describe themselves as more generous in general terms (trait ratings) and in terms of concrete instances (estimates of relative charitable giving).

The meta-stereotype salience manipulation also had a marginal effect on levels of Scottish identification. However when this effect is controlled for, the effects of condition on the extent to which Scots portray themselves as mean only becomes stronger. Thus it is difficult to explain the findings in terms of a generic cognitive consequence of social identification such as, say, positive in-group differentiation (Tajfel, 1978). Indeed participants describe themselves more positively (i.e. as less mean) in the meta-stereotype salient condition where identity is, if anything, less salient.

It should be noted that in both conditions participants are directed to think about the relationship between the English and themselves as Scots. Hence, our results cannot be put down to some other effects of comparative context (such as its effects on the in-group prototype: Turner et al., 1987) beyond salience of identification. Rather they seem to be due to the fact that only in the meta-stereotype condition are participants to think about what the English think of them and what they themselves think of these thoughts.

It is also noteworthy that the effect of meta-stereotype salience is obtained only on the mean items and not those measuring hard-working. This sustains our contention

that helping is not so much a means of making the in-group look good in general but rather a means of refuting the specific notion that the in-group is mean.

However it is important to note that as we do not measure actual helping behaviors our effects are limited to Scots' self-descriptions: it is one thing to describe one's group as generous, it is quite another to give generously. Furthermore, we only measure self-descriptions of helping in general. Therefore we are unable to ascertain whether meta-stereotype salience impacts upon certain types of helping - notably out-group helping - more than others (our H2a as outlined in the Introduction).

In our third and final Study, we address these limitations. Specifically, we explore whether increasing the salience of the mean meta-stereotype results in higher levels of actual giving to the out-group in particular.

Study 3

Introduction

In Study 3 we again manipulate the salience of the mean meta-stereotype but now examine behavioral consequences in terms of actual helping to in-group and out-group members. In this final Study, participants are given a text which purportedly describes how they are viewed by the English. One version (mean meta-stereotype salient) stresses that the English see them as mean, the other (mean meta-stereotype non-salient) stresses a different flaw – that the English see them as naïve and unrealistic.

The advantage of this procedure is the greater equivalence between conditions and the greater directness of the manipulation. Had we employed such directness in Study 2, it might have led participants to guess the true purpose of the experiment, especially as the dependent measures came immediately after the manipulation (hence it was necessary

to have a more indirect manipulation). However, in Study 3 the cover story is more elaborate and the dependent measure is, ostensibly, not part of the experiment. Hence, even with a direct meta-stereotype manipulation the relationship to helping remains opaque to participants.

To recap, we predict that our Scottish participants will be more helpful when they are told the English think them to be mean as opposed to naïve, especially where the recipient of help is an out-group member.

Method

Design. The design had two between-subjects factors, each with two levels. The first was the salience of the mean meta-stereotype (Salient vs. Non-salient). The second was the recipient of help (In-group vs. Out-group).

Participants. One hundred and ten undergraduate Scottish students (37 males, 73 females) attending a Scottish University participated in return for a course credit. Participants (from the same class) took part in the experiment in four groups (each corresponding to one experimental condition). The allocation to condition was random. The cell sizes were as follows: Mean meta-stereotype salient, In-group recipient = 27; Mean meta-stereotype salient, Out-group recipient = 30; Mean meta-stereotype non-salient, In-group recipient = 24; Mean meta-stereotype non-salient, Out-group recipient = 29.

Materials. The meta-stereotype was manipulated by giving participants information that supposedly came from a survey conducted by the experimenters concerning how English people viewed the Scots. To make the manipulation plausible it was embedded within text explaining that the English did not see the Scots in completely

negative terms (the Scots were also seen as “hard-working”, “brave” and “conscientious”). The section containing the manipulation either stressed that the English see the Scots as mean or as naïve. These texts are identical to those in Study 1.

The manipulation of the recipient of help was contained in an appeal from a (fictional) charity working with victims of violent crime. In the In-group conditions, the charity was called “Support Scottish Victims of Violence” and the relevant materials contained a Scottish flag. In the Out-group conditions, the charity was called “Support Welsh Victims of Violence” and the relevant materials carried a Welsh flag.

The dependent variable was the amount of helping volunteered. Helping was measured using two behavioral indices. Participants had to indicate first, how many raffle tickets (priced 10p – roughly 17 cents – each) they would buy from the fictional charity, and, second, how many books of tickets (containing 10 tickets each) they would sell.

Participants completed three further measures. The first was a scale of Scottish identification (four items answered on 7-point scales, Cronbach’s alpha = .92). The second was an auto-stereotype scale. This included seven items related to being mean (“Scots are generous”, “Scots are helpful”, “Scots are charitable”, “Scots are mean” (reversed), “The Scottish are generally helpful people”, “The Scottish will put themselves out for anybody in need” and “The Scots have a strong sense of responsibility toward other people in general”) answered on 7-point scales (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely) (Cronbach’s alpha = .83). The third addressed whether people recalled the manipulation of the meta-stereotype correctly. It asked “what negative Scottish characteristic did the English comment on?”

Procedure

The Study was introduced as exploring group processes and memory. Participants were told the researchers were studying Scottish people's memories for what the English thought about them. Both researchers were English and as they were not attached to the university in which the study was being conducted were able to present themselves as visitors from an English university. An English member of staff working in the participants' department (hereafter, the "host") introduced the researchers.

The researchers explained they were studying English people's images of Scots and had come to Scotland to meet some "real-life" Scots because this would help their research. They explained they would present their findings concerning the English stereotype of Scots which would be followed by a memory test that would be scored by the researchers. Each participant was given a response booklet entitled "Group Processes and Memory Performance. English Views of Scots: Recall Test" and bearing colored pictures of the Scottish and English flags. Participants identified themselves by recording their group name ("Scottish") and an individual number.

The booklet contained all the texts and memory test items. Participants were allowed 90 seconds to digest the meta-stereotype information (which varied according to condition). After a further 120 seconds they completed the recall test. This not only maintained the cover story but contained a question to check their memory for how they were seen by the English.

Following the test the researchers collected the answer booklets and, leaving the room, explained they would return after marking participants' memory performance.

They apologized that this would take 10 minutes, and following a previously arranged script, the host replied that this was alright because a postgraduate student had asked to make an announcement that could conveniently happen now.

After the experimenters left a confederate entered and explained that she had completed an MSc in Cardiff (Wales) and was now pursuing this work for a PhD in Scotland. She explained that her PhD concerned people's experiences of coping with crimes such as being attacked in bars or clubs and described her involvement in a victim support group. In the In-group helping conditions, the confederate described her current work as relating to the experience of crime in Scotland. In the Out-group helping conditions, she described her current work in identical terms, except that it related to the experience of crime in Wales. In all conditions the confederate explained she was helping the victim support group raise money through a raffle. Tickets were priced at 10p each with prizes including wine, CDs, etc. Participants were asked to volunteer to buy and sell these tickets, and each was given a form to show how many tickets they would personally buy, and how many books of tickets they would be willing to sell (although it was stressed that help was entirely voluntary). Participants were told that there was not time to collect money or hand out raffle booklets so those volunteering would be contacted later.

After the appeal the postgraduate confederate claimed to have to leave for another appointment, and the host explained that she (the host) would gather the forms for her. This allowed the experimenters to match the volunteering form with the participants' questionnaire. Furthermore, as the host was English and working with the English

experimenters, this arrangement implied that participants' helping would be visible to an English audience.

Following completion of the volunteering forms the researchers returned. Although they claimed to have marked the test, the scores reported (in the form of a percentage) were contrived and varied between 78% and 82%. After participants received their scored booklet, they completed another questionnaire concerning their level of Scottish identification and their Scottish auto-stereotype. Once completed, the answer booklet, helping form and identification questionnaire were placed into individual envelopes. Participants were told that the experiment was finished and then took part in a structured debrief.

Results

Preliminary analyses.

Manipulation check. Participants' recall of the meta-stereotype manipulation was investigated through exploring responses to the question "what negative Scottish characteristic did the English comment on?" In each condition participants were given four response options: the correct answer (salient condition: "ungenerous"; non-salient condition: "naïve"), a synonym of the correct answer (salient condition: "penny pinching"; non-salient condition: "trusting") and two semantically incorrect answers (salient condition: "contempt for others" and "disrespectful"; non-salient condition: "idealistic" and "impractical"). Participants were accurate in their answers. In the mean meta-stereotype salient conditions all 56 participants chose either the correct response or its synonym (Correct, in-group recipient = 17; Correct, out-group recipient = 19;

Synonym, in-group recipient = 10; Synonym, out-group recipient = 10). In the mean meta-stereotype non-salient conditions all 53 participants chose the correct response.

Identification. Participants' identification as Scottish was highly skewed towards the high end of the 7-point scale (mode = 7, MDN = 6.5, M = 6.0, SD = 1.27, skewness = -1.65, kurtosis = 2.40). As there was not enough variation to analyse the effect of level of identification we restricted our analyses to high identifiers since this is the sample for which we would expect the meta-stereotype manipulation to be consequential. We used a criterion score of 5.5 for 'high identifiers' because it is the point at which, more often than not, people are expressing strong agreement with statements about their identification. This led to the inclusion of 88 participants (29 males, 59 females). The resultant cell sizes were: mean meta-stereotype salient, in-group recipient = 21; mean meta-stereotype, out-group recipient = 23; mean meta-stereotype non-salient, in-group recipient = 20; mean meta-stereotype non-salient, out-group recipient' = 24. Levels of identification were extremely high in all conditions: mean meta-stereotype salient, in-group recipient M = 6.51 (SD = .48); mean meta-stereotype salient, out-group recipient M = 6.62 (SD = .43); mean meta-stereotype non-salient, in-group recipient M = 6.45 (SD = .54); mean meta-stereotype non-salient, out-group recipient M = 6.59 (SD = .47).

Analysis revealed no effects of condition.

Helping. The raffle-ticket buying data were not normally distributed. For the 88 high identifiers the numbers volunteering to buy tickets were: zero tickets = 20; 1 ticket = 1; 3 tickets = 1; 5 tickets = 12; 10 tickets = 37; 20 tickets = 11; 30 tickets = 3; 50 tickets = 3 (skewness = 2.051; kurtosis = 5.476). The raffle book selling data were even more non-normally distributed: zero books = 63; 1 book = 2; 2 books = 3; 3 books = 2; 4 books

= 1; 5 books = 6; 10 books = 8; 20 books = 2; 50 books = 1 (skewness = 4.998; kurtosis = 31.990). We suspect the large number refusing to sell tickets reflects the multi-dimensional nature of the task: it involves approaching others, asking for/collecting money etc and requires complex social skills and a sense of efficacy as well as a willingness to help. This implies that raffle ticket selling is a poor measure and so our analyses focus on the raffle-ticket buying data. This decision receives support if we investigate the number who volunteered to sell raffle tickets but who did not offer to buy tickets. Out of 88, only 2 fall into this category which suggests that in disregarding the selling data we are not overlooking a significant form of helping (for information the numbers falling in the other categories are: neither volunteering to buy nor sell = 18; offering to buy but not sell = 45; offering to both buy and sell = 23).

Table 1 about here

Hypothesis testing.

Raffle-ticket buying. Given the distribution of the raffle ticket buying data we subjected these data to a square root transformation. This resulted in data much more suitable for ANOVA (skewness = .038; kurtosis = -.077). The condition means for the original and the transformed data are reported in table 1.

Analysis of the transformed data in a 2 (meta-stereotype: mean /naïve) X 2 (recipient: in-group/out-group) ANOVA revealed no main effect of meta-stereotype

salience, $F(1, 84) = 3.38$, $p = .070$, $\eta^2 = .039$, an effect of recipient, $F(1, 84) = 4.30$, $p = .041$, $\eta^2 = .049$, and most importantly, an interaction, $F(1, 84) = 4.06$, $p = .047$, $\eta^2 = .046$. As expected, the meta-stereotype manipulation did not have an impact when the recipient was in-group (M mean = 2.23, M naïve = 2.29) but did when the recipient was out-group (M mean = 3.71, M naïve = 2.31: $t(45) = 2.80$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .149$). Indeed, the level of helping when the meta-stereotype was salient and the recipient was out-group was higher than that found when the recipient was in-group regardless of meta-stereotype salience (M mean meta-stereotype salient, out-group recipient = 3.71 vs. M mean meta-stereotype salient, in-group recipient = 2.23, $t(42) = -2.83$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .160$; M mean meta-stereotype salient, out-group recipient = 3.71 vs. M mean meta-stereotype non-salient, in-group recipient = 2.29, $t(41) = -2.68$, $p = .011$, $\eta^2 = .149$).

These results were also obtained when the original (non-transformed data) are analysed either by ANOVA or non-parametric procedures.²

Other measures. The condition means for the auto-stereotype measure (a higher score = more generous) were as follows: M mean meta-stereotype salient, in-group recipient = 5.12 ($SD = .65$); M mean meta-stereotype salient, out-group recipient = 5.06 ($SD = .67$); M mean meta-stereotype non-salient, in-group recipient = 5.23 ($SD = .66$); M mean meta-stereotype non-salient, out-group recipient = 4.80 ($SD = .69$). Neither of the main effects for mean meta-stereotype salience or the recipient of helping were significant, nor was the interaction (respectively: $F(1,82) = .27$, $p = .60$; $F(1,82) = 2.99$, $p = .087$; $F(1,82) = 1.66$, $p = .202$).

Discussion

The results from this Study support both our H2 and H2a. When the mean meta-stereotype is salient, participants express higher levels of helping towards out-group members but not towards in-group members. The finding is all the more powerful because we are not using estimations of intention to help, but rather what participants believe to be genuine acts of giving to charity. When we revealed to participants that the person making the charitable appeal was in fact a confederate, there was genuine surprise. Not one person mentioned any doubts over the genuineness of the appeal.

At first sight there may seem to be an anomaly between studies 2 and 3. In this Study unlike the last, we find no effect of meta-stereotype salience on the Scottish auto-stereotype. However, in Study 2, the auto-stereotype is the only tool through which participants can communicate their helpfulness. In Study 3, participants can demonstrate their helpfulness much more vividly and directly through acts of giving.

Whether this explanation is valid or not, the lack of difference on this measure means that one cannot put variations in the level of helping down to differences in the content of the in-group auto-stereotype. Equally, the fact that our revised manipulation of meta-stereotype salience did not produce any differences between conditions in Scottish identification means that the results cannot be put down to levels of identification per se.

This leaves an explanation in terms of meta-stereotype salience. It is true that we have no direct measure of this construct and hence no analysis to show that it accounts for the effect of our manipulation on helping. However any direct test of mean meta-stereotype salience would create serious problems of reactivity. Getting people to think

and respond explicitly about how the English see them, one would invoke notions of meanness that might not otherwise have come to mind. This is not simply a measurement issue. Such a check would undermine the manipulation by rendering salient the Scots reputation for meanness in all conditions.

Our analysis of the recall items relating to the manipulation shows that participants could at least access the mean meta-stereotype in the salient condition. Moreover, the act of endorsing the mean or penny-pinching terms renders the meta-stereotype more salient. While the accessibility of the naïve meta-stereotype in the non-salient conditions does not, in and of itself, show that “meanness” was not accessible, recent work on retrieval induced forgetting (e.g. MacLeod & Macrae, 2001; Saunders & MacLeod, 2002) suggests that the very act of recalling an alternative aspect of the meta-stereotype can be expected to inhibit access to the mean meta-stereotype. In other words, in measurement terms, the memory findings are consonant with our assumptions about salience and, in process terms, our check serves to strengthen rather than weaken the manipulation.

However, the strength of an explanation in terms of the salience of the mean meta-stereotype lies not only in our ability to measure the construct itself but also in its theoretical ability to account for the pattern of results as a whole. What is particularly noteworthy about these results is not simply the fact that, relatively speaking, the manipulation of meta-stereotype salience affects out-group helping but not in-group helping. Indeed, the absolute level of helping for the out-group in the mean meta-stereotype salient condition is higher than for in-group helping in either the mean meta-stereotype non-salient or salient conditions. Given that so much of the literature suggests

that helping depends upon in-group inclusion, the finding that out-group helping can be raised so as to surpass in-group helping might seem quite perplexing. But what is anomalous in terms of traditional social cognitive explanations makes perfect sense in terms of a strategic approach where the issue is what forms of behavior best communicate the desired message to the relevant audience. From this perspective forms of behavior which one might least expect are the most powerful communicative tools. That is, the improbability of out-group helping is what renders it strategically effective as a means of demonstrating ones helpfulness. So when, because it is made salient that a relevant other puts it in doubt, a doubt is cast over in-group generosity, out-group helping is the single form of behavior one would expect to be accentuated.

There is one further strand to this argument. It will be recalled from Study 1 that the texts for the meta-stereotype salient and non-salient conditions did not differ in the extent to which they were rated as unfair by young Scots nor in the extent to which these Scots were motivated to refute them. That is, both texts were seen as equally negative and the fact that in Study 3 effects are unique to the meta-stereotype salient condition indicates that out-group helping is less a response to negative meta-stereotypes in general. It is more a specific act of communication which has potency in refuting the specific accusation of meanness.

Conclusion

Over three studies we have shown (a) that Scots believe they are seen as mean by the English, that they resent this stereotype, are motivated to refute it and believe out-group helping is the most effective way of doing so, (b) that increasing the salience of the

mean meta-stereotype leads young Scots to accentuate the extent to which they describe Scottish people as generous, and (c) that it also leads to helping directed to out-group members. Our results therefore support our hypotheses, and the notion that people are seeking to use helping behaviors as a means of refuting specific negative meta-stereotypes provides a compelling explanation of these results.

Future research could usefully extend this thinking. First, it may well be true that out-group helping is not used to challenge negative meta-stereotypes in general, but rather that the specific meanings associated with this helping are used to refute specific out-group stereotypes. However that doesn't mean that these meanings are only potent in disproving accusations of meanness. Drawing on the Bulgarian example, as outlined in the introduction, out-group helping may also refute (and hence be invoked by) accusations that the in-group is uncivilized. Are there other meta-stereotypes which invoke helping and moreover, does the type of accusation also impact on the type of helping offered? For example, it might be that helping the weak and oppressed could be especially important in relation to 'uncivilized' meta-stereotypes. Second, are there limit conditions to the impact of a 'mean' meta-stereotype on helping? Is this impact sensitive to the extent to which in-group members are visible to the out-group (as we suggest), and also to such factors as the power of the out-group to impose consequences upon the in-group? Third, while it may well be true that in-group members increase out-group helping to refute the mean meta-stereotype, we could investigate whether this is actually effective?

However, for the present it is appropriate to underline the significance to the present Studies as they stand – not least that they show how in-group identification is

linked to out-group helping. More generally, this work has implications for our understanding of both the strategic dimension to group processes and the nature of helping behavior. As concerns the former, we provide further evidence for the utility of explanations that imply that some behaviors may be acts of communication intended to ameliorate the position of the group in an inter-group context. For example, Study 3 provides evidence that phenomena traditionally viewed as being determined by internal cognitive representations may be better viewed as strategic acts of communication. Helping is not simply an outcome of identity processes, but can be an active intervention into these processes. As concerns the issue of helping there is a simple yet important implication to be drawn. As argued at the outset, it is generally assumed that people who help must be concerned with the fate of others. Hence what we need to explain is why people should be so concerned. Our work adds to a literature with origins in early anthropological investigations which implies that providing for others may reflect concerns over our own collective interests. This work cautions that research into pro-social behavior must avoid the old fallacy of inferring the motivations of the actor from the observer's definition of the act. People may be seen to do good to their fellow creatures without having anything remotely God-like about their dispositions.

Footnotes

¹ <http://www.scotweb.co.uk/underthekilt/beingmean.html> (n.d.) downloaded 21/6/06.

² For information, when the original (non-transformed) raffle-ticket buying data (available in table 1) were analyzed in a 2 (meta-stereotype: mean /naïve) X 2 (recipient: in-group/out-group) ANOVA we found main effects for meta-stereotype salience, $F(1, 84) = 4.15$, $p = .045$, $\eta^2 = .047$, and recipient, $F(1, 84) = 4.64$, $p = .034$, $\eta^2 = .052$. The interaction was also significant, $F(1, 84) = 4.61$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = .052$. As predicted, the meta-stereotype manipulation had no impact when the recipient was in-group ($M_{\text{mean}} = 7.67$, $M_{\text{naïve}} = 7.90$) but had a clear impact when the recipient was out-group ($M_{\text{mean}} = 16.74$, $M_{\text{naïve}} = 7.92$: $t(33.07) = 2.81$, $p = .008$). Again, the level of helping when the meta-stereotype was salient and the recipient was out-group ($M = 16.74$) was higher than that found when the recipient was in-group and the mean meta-stereotype salient ($M = 7.67$) $t(42) = -2.49$, $p = .017$, or when the recipient was in-group and the mean meta-stereotype was non-salient and ($M = 7.90$), $t(33.67) = -2.67$, $p = .009$.

To confirm these findings we re-analysed these (non-transformed) data using non-parametric tests. A Kruskal-Wallis test across the four cells showed an overall effect of condition ($\chi^2(3) = 11.72$, $p = .008$). Further comparisons (Mann-Whitney) confirmed that the Welsh appeal received more help when the Scots' reputation for meanness was prominent than when it was not ($U = 160.0$, $Z = -2.59$, $p = .01$). Also there was more buying when the recipient was Welsh and the mean meta-stereotype was salient than when the recipient was Scottish and the meta-stereotype salient ($U = 118.0$, $Z = -2.99$, p

= .003), or when the recipient was Scottish and the meta-stereotype non-salient ($U = 134.5$, $Z = -2.41$, $p = .016$).

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Table 1

Study 3. Raffle tickets bought (original and transformed data) for High identifying Scottish participants (means and standard deviations)

Mean meta-stereotype	Request for help			
	In-group		Out-group	
	Non-salient	Salient	Non-salient	Salient
Number of raffle tickets bought:				
original data	7.90 (6.83)	7.67 (10.53)	7.92 (7.06)	16.74 (13.37)
transformed data	2.29 (1.67)	2.23 (1.68)	2.31 (1.64)	3.71 (1.77)