

The Process of Group Differentiation in a Dynamic Intergroup Setting

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this study was to examine the social categorization processes of between-group differentiation and within-group similarity in a dynamic intergroup setting. Traditionally, these processes have generally been examined in static settings, and it was hypothesized that they may not operate in the same way when group members are in a dynamic intergroup setting. Spectators at four collegiate hockey games were tested throughout the games in order to examine ingroup (home team) versus outgroup (visiting team) perceptions. The traditional effect of ingroup favoritism was found with respect to between-group differentiation, but this effect was influenced by objective measures of performance (i.e., goals). For negative characteristics, ingroup favoritism prevailed regardless of the ingroup's relative performance. The results also demonstrated that a distinction could be made between ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination. Although the results pertaining to within-group similarity were only suggestive, they indicated that the outgroup homogeneity effect was not operating in this dynamic context.

A MAJOR CHALLENGE facing researchers in the field of intergroup relations is to study social psychological processes in dynamic rather than static intergroup settings. The work of Sherif is prototypic of intergroup research in

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a dynamic context. He and his associates (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961) studied groups that experienced developmental stages in their interactions, including the formation of ingroup solidarity, intergroup competition, and intergroup cooperation. Rather than continuing in this dynamic tradition, however, researchers have tended to focus on social psychological processes within static intergroup contexts. The groups studied often are created artificially and only exist for the duration of a laboratory experiment (see Austin & Worchel, 1979; Tajfel, 1982; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). Consequently, fundamental processes in social categorization, such as between-group differentiation and within-group similarity, have been tested mainly in static intergroup settings. The purpose of the present study was to test certain key assumptions concerning these processes as they operate in a dynamic "real-life" intergroup setting.

Between-Group Differentiation

The phenomenon of between-group differentiation (the tendency for members of a group to exaggerate the differences between their own group and a rival outgroup) has been central to the study of intergroup relations. For example, between-group differentiation is a cornerstone of social identity theory, as developed by Tajfel and his colleagues (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to this theory, individuals strive to achieve both a distinct and positive social identity, defined as ". . . that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). When membership in a particular group is made salient to an individual he or she will attempt to differentiate his or her ingroup from an outgroup on dimensions that would bolster the ingroup's prestige. Such positively discrepant comparisons would in turn enhance the individual's self-esteem through social identification. Ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination, therefore, are two very basic forms of between-group differentiation.

The process of between-group differentiation has been amply demonstrated in experiments using the "minimal group paradigm" (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Hogg & Turner, 1985; Moghaddam & Stringer, 1986; Tajfel, 1978, 1982). This paradigm represents a classic static context where groups (a) are created by the experimenter, (b) have no past history, (c) exist only for the period of the experiment, (d) have little or no developmental processes involved in their interaction, and (e) are not involved in real conflict. By contrast, very little attention has been given to the phenomenon of between-group differentiation in dynamic settings (for an exception, see Brown, 1978). Within dynamic intergroup contexts, such as nations in open conflict, sport teams in competition, or labor and management in contract negotiations, cer-

tain objective realities about group performance are present and continually changing (e.g., casualty figures, team scores, concessions), and these realities may alter the effects of ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination. For example, when two nations are at war with one another and one side eventually finds itself at an obvious disadvantage, the focus of differentiation would be expected to change: Comparisons could no longer be made on performance dimensions such as strength and ability if the losing group member wants to maintain a positive social identity. Thus, there are reasons to suspect that between-group differentiation might evolve differently in dynamic real-life contexts than the way it has been demonstrated in static laboratory settings because of the potential for change in the intergroup relationship.

Within-Group Similarity

The notion of group similarity is also central to theories of intergroup relations. Tajfel (1982) argued that although social categorization leads to an exaggeration of between-group differences, it also leads to a minimization of within-group differences: Members within the same group are perceived as being relatively more similar to one another. Moreover, a number of laboratory studies have recently demonstrated that within-group similarity is more prominent in the perception of outgroups than in the perception of ingroups (Linville, 1982; Linville & Jones, 1980; Park & Rothbart, 1982; Quattrone & Jones, 1980; Wilder, 1984). For example, Park and Rothbart (1982) had women from three campus sororities rate the degree of intragroup similarity for their own group and for the other groups. Each sorority judged its own members to be more dissimilar than members of the other sororities. This phenomenon has been labelled the *assumption of outgroup homogeneity* (Park & Rothbart, 1982).

Although the notion of outgroup homogeneity has received considerable support (see Quattrone, 1986), no one has yet demonstrated its generalizability to a situation where group membership is made salient in more dynamic intergroup encounters. There are indications that the statically derived outgroup homogeneity principle may not be applicable in a competitive intergroup situation. Stephan (1985) argued that the ingroup is not always perceived as a heterogeneous group and suggested that ingroup homogeneity increases when intergroup contacts are involved. For example, Doise, Deschamps, and Meyer (1978) found that Swiss children perceived their ingroup as being more similar when it was rated along with non-Swiss groups than when it was rated alone. Furthermore, a review of the conflict and cohesion literature (Dion, 1979) revealed that conflict generally leads to ingroup cohesion. Because most dynamic intergroup settings involve some form of conflict (e.g., competition for resources), a need for ingroup cohesion may arise and lead to high ratings of ingroup similarity. Because the present study was con-

ducted in a dynamic intergroup setting of a competitive nature and the setting also involved intergroup contact and conflict, it was expected that ratings of ingroup similarity would not be different from ratings of outgroup similarity. More to the point, the assumption of outgroup homogeneity was not expected to hold in a dynamic setting.

The Setting

To examine social perception processes within a dynamic intergroup context, the present study focused on a series of intercollegiate hockey games. A number of factors make this an appropriate setting for studying these processes. First, ice hockey is a fast-paced game with no set breaks in play: Personnel changes are made "on the fly" and there is limited opportunity for spectator distraction. Second, the focus of attention is usually centered around the puck, which changes sides very often, and thus spectators attend to the behavior of both ingroup and outgroup members. Third, in a sports setting objective criteria reflect each group's performance. For example, goals indicate who is winning or losing, whereas shots on goal indicate who is controlling the game. A fourth advantage is that the groups involved have a past, present, and future, and their relative strength can be mapped out in terms of their standing in the league hierarchy. Finally, a convenient advantage of this setting is that each game has three periods and two 15-min breaks. These breaks allow time for assessing spectator perceptions at different moments in the encounter.

From an intergroup perspective, therefore, the sports setting enables us to test the phenomena of positive group distinctiveness and outgroup homogeneity in a natural and important intergroup competitive situation. North Americans spend a good deal of their leisure time involved in sports as either participants or spectators, and spectators "belong to a meaningful group with the team" (Sloan, 1979). Because the present study focused on collegiate games, the shared membership of participants and spectators is bolstered by the fact that most of them share membership in the same university. More importantly, the research setting was one where process and outcome were not readily controlled and the intergroup dynamics followed an exciting path.

Method

Subjects

Fan perceptions were examined at four home games of the McGill Redmen, a team that, along with four other teams, is part of the Quebec University Athletic Association. These games took place in a 6-week period during the winter of 1986. Each of the four games involved a different opponent.

Throughout the period of the season in which testing took place, the home team stayed in the middle of the standings. All of the games turned out to be relatively close and the Redmen were victorious in all four.

The final sample included 21 subjects from game 1, 15 from game 2, 18 from game 3, and 14 from game 4 for a total of 68 subjects (47 males, 21 females). To be considered as partisans, respondents had to identify themselves as being either a fan, a friend, or a relative of a team member. Participation was voluntary and respondents were guaranteed anonymity. Given the difficulties of testing in the field, a number of subjects did not complete all aspects of the questionnaire and, consequently, sample sizes differ in the analyses.

Procedure

Subjects were randomly approached (individually or in small groups) at the main gate by one of four male experimenters. The experimenter introduced himself as a member of a group of social psychologists at the university who were interested in assessing fan perceptions of the Redmen and their opponents as the game progressed. Subjects were selected if they were supporters of the home team, if they were willing to participate, and if they had not filled out the questionnaire at a previous game (in order to ensure independent observations). A five-page booklet entitled "McGill Redmen Hockey Survey" was given to the subject along with verbal instructions as to its use with a particular emphasis on instructions regarding the rating scales. Brief written instructions were provided to supplement the verbal instructions given with the questionnaire. Subjects were told that it would take a few minutes of their time before the game began, as well as a few minutes at the end of each period. They were thanked for their cooperation and a meeting place was arranged with the experimenter so that the questionnaires could be collected at the end of the game. The return rate was approximately 75%.

Materials

The first page of the booklet included a brief introduction followed by questions regarding sex, ethnicity, relationship with the team, number of games attended, league knowledge, and general hockey knowledge. Following these were questions of emotional involvement in the game (from *very low* to *very high* and from *negative* to *positive*), predicted game closeness (from *not close* to *very close*), and predicted game domination (from *opponent* to *McGill*). These last four ratings, which used 9-point scales, were asked again at the end of each period with respect to that period.

The second page of the booklet involved the pre-game ratings on the two central dependent measures. The first measure, which focused on between-

group differentiation, involved rating the ingroup and their opponent on 9-point rating scales (from *not at all* to *very*) for 10 different characteristics. The 10 characteristics were chosen from an initial pool of items that were presented to two hockey experts. The selected items were judged to represent a range of characteristics that focused on different aspects of the game of hockey. They were: *skilled, cohesive, speedy, disciplined, hard-working, aggressive-clean, entertaining, intelligent, aggressive-dirty, and arrogant*. The second measure was concerned with within-group similarity and involved rating the diversity displayed by team members on each team on the same 10 characteristics using a 5-point rating scale (from *no diversity* to *high diversity*). Subjects were told that within a team there seems to be a range in the abilities and characteristics of players in that some are much better than others. A higher rating of diversity was to be used when they felt that big differences existed between players of a team on a given characteristic. The two sets of ratings were given again at the end of each period using a separate page. To control for order effects, a different random order of characteristics was used for each period.

Game Events

In order to delineate the key events taking place in the different games, three objective performance measures were calculated. The first, *advantage by period*, consisted of the score differential within each period. The second, *cumulative score differential*, was the difference in goals at the end of each period added across periods. For example, in the second period of the first game each team scored a goal so that the advantage by period score for this period equalled zero. In the first period of this same game the ingroup had 1 goal and the opponent had 2: The cumulative difference score at the end of the second period, therefore, equalled -1 , because the total score at that time was 3 to 2 in favor of the opponent. Finally a *shots on goal* measure was the difference between the two teams in the number of shots on goal for each period. All difference scores were calculated by subtracting an outgroup score from an ingroup score.

Results

Between-Group Differentiation

In order to examine the effects of games and periods on the process of between-group differentiation, individual team ratings on the 9-point scales were analyzed in a Game (1, 2, 3, 4) \times Period (pre, 1, 2, 3) \times Group (ingroup vs. opponent) split-plot factorial design (repeated measures on Period and Group). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) procedure was

used for the 10 dependent measures. Given the number of missing observations for certain scales (usually for pre-game or end of period ratings), the analyses reported are based on the data of 47 subjects. Using Hotelling's generalized T squared as a test statistic, significant main effects were found for Game, $F(30, 100) = 1.87, p < .01$, Period, $F(30, 353) = 1.75, p < .01$, and Group, $F(10, 34) = 4.99, p < .001$, as well as significant interaction effects for Game \times Group, $F(30, 100) = 1.88, p < .02$, Period \times Group, $F(30, 352) = 365, p < .001$, and Game \times Period \times Group, $F(90, 829) = 1.59, p < .001$. The Period \times Game interaction was not significant. Although the main effect for Group indicated that between-group differentiation was taking place, the significant interactions, which all involved the group factor, suggested that certain events taking place in the games or periods were mediating the process of group differentiation.

Univariate analyses of variance were conducted on the 10 dependent measures to determine specifically where the significant effects were located. Given the number of measures involved, only effects significant at the .01 probability level were considered. A summary of the results of these analyses are presented in Table 1. The most reliable pattern in the findings was the significant effect for Group, which was found for 9 of the 10 measures. All means followed the traditional pattern of ingroup favoritism: The ingroup

TABLE 1
Characteristics Having Significant Sources of Variance

Characteristics	Significant source of variance					
	Game (3, 43)	Period (3, 129)	Group (1, 43)	Game by group (3, 43)	Period by group (3, 129)	Game by period by group (9, 129)
Skilled	3.75	2.66	14.05*	2.44	12.88*	2.85*
Cohesive	1.52	1.13	11.11*	0.54	13.01	1.81
Speedy	2.64	1.79	5.19	0.53	16.39*	2.46
Disciplined	2.40	2.61	17.10*	4.39	6.14*	2.72*
Hard-working	5.67*	1.11	22.25*	1.06	11.06*	1.03
Aggressive- Clean	3.83	3.89	42.72*	5.20*	1.37	2.37
Entertaining	1.75	1.33	19.73*	0.95	8.08*	2.70*
Intelligent	1.40	2.32	31.16*	2.79	4.11*	2.41
Aggressive- Dirty	1.50	5.56*	30.72*	1.96	0.56	0.77
Arrogant	0.49	1.11	19.66*	3.90	1.37	1.64

Note. Degrees of freedom in parentheses.

* $p < .01$.

(home team) received higher ratings than the outgroup (opponent) except for the two negative characteristics (aggressive-dirty and arrogant) where the pattern of the means was reversed. Caution is warranted in the interpretation of these main effects for group because they were all tempered by some type of interaction effect (except for the negative characteristics, for which no interaction effects were found). Ratings on the negatively evaluative characteristics, therefore, were not influenced by the developments occurring in the interactions.

The higher order three-way interactions for "skilled," "disciplined," and "entertaining" indicated that group ratings differed across periods and that the pattern was different within games. In order to determine whether the different group ratings across periods and games were due to the different events occurring within these periods and games, *group differential scores* for the three periods of all four games were correlated with their corresponding game events. A group differential score was calculated for each of the 10 characteristics within each period and game by subtracting the mean opponent rating on the 9-point scale from the mean ingroup rating. In order to correct the problem of nonindependent observations within games (the same subjects made ratings for three periods), group difference scores were standardized within games. This correlational analysis is exploratory in nature, because it is based on only 12 observations (4 games \times 3 periods) and it does not take into account the pre-game ratings that were also part of the Goal \times Period \times Game interactions. Nonetheless, the results provide insight into the relationship between group differentiation and intergroup interaction events. The correlations obtained in this analysis are presented in Table 2.

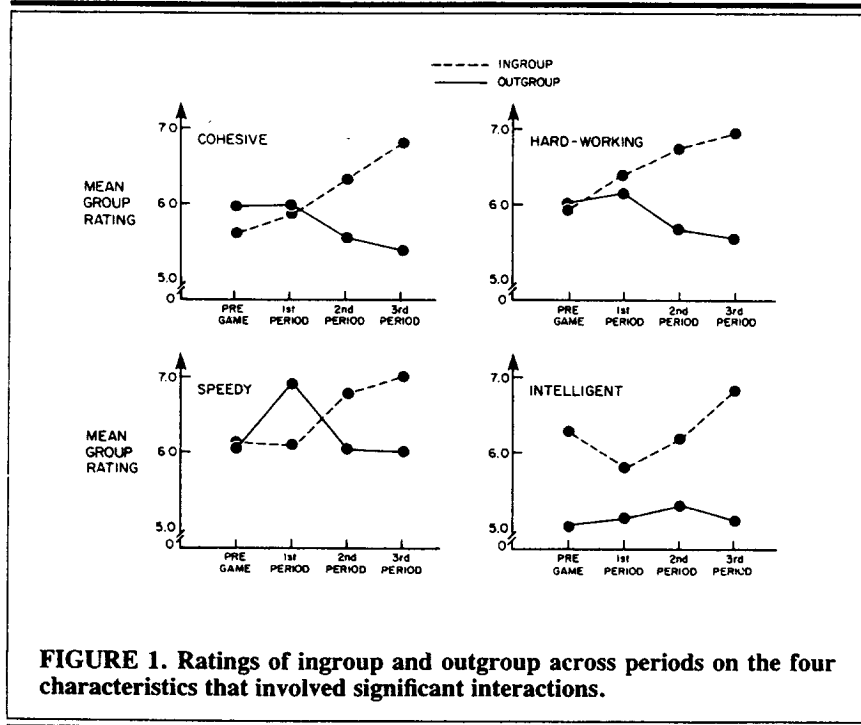
TABLE 2
Correlations of Differential Group Ratings with Game Statistics

Characteristics	Advantage by period	Cumulative score differential	Shots on goal
Skilled	.85**	.80**	.29
Cohesive	.59*	.59*	-.02
Speedy	.38	.43	.13
Disciplined	.70**	.62*	.23
Hard-working	.54	.43	.45
Aggressive-Clean	.47	.38	.22
Entertaining	.75**	.69**	-.05
Intelligent	.82**	.81**	-.09
Aggressive-Dirty	.49	.47	.60*
Arrogant	.36	.19	.52

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The first observation derived from Table 2 is that the pattern of group differentiation seemed to be a function of the goals scored but not of the number of shots taken. This latter variable had only one significant relationship. The second observation is that significant correlations were found for all three measures having significant Goal \times Period \times Group interactions (skilled, disciplined, entertaining) with both goal-derived measures. These correlations indicated that the differential ratings given to groups varied across games and periods along with the key events taking place, namely goals: Greater between-group differentiation in favor of the ingroup is associated with greater score differentials in favor of the ingroup. The correlational analysis, therefore, helps explain the pattern of group differentiation suggested by the higher order interactions that were obtained.

A further examination of the univariate analyses presented in Table 1 reveals that the Period \times Group interaction was found for seven of the dependent measures. Three of these interactions were subsumed under the three-way interactions that were presented (skilled, disciplined, entertaining). Attention was directed at the four remaining interactions that involved the measures cohesive, speedy, hard-working, and intelligent. These interactions are represented in Figure 1.



In order to explore the pattern of means in Figure 1, tests of simple main effects were conducted using a Newman-Keuls procedure and adopting a .01 probability level for significance. The results give rise to two general observations. First, between-group differences usually occurred toward the end of the game. The ingroup was given a significantly more favorable rating than the outgroup for all four measures at the end of the second and third periods. The only other ingroup favoritism effect was found in the pre-game ratings on intelligence. The outgroup was found to be more favorably rated than the ingroup only for the measure of speedy at the end of the first period (note that the home team was losing three out of four games at the end of this period).

The second general finding drawn from the tests of simple main effects was that within-group differences across periods occurred almost exclusively for the ingroup. On the ingroup measure of cohesiveness the third period rating differed significantly from pre-game and first period ratings, whereas the second period ratings differed from the pre-game rating. For the speedy measure, the third period rating was greater than pre-game and first period ratings. For hard-working, second and third period ratings were greater than that of the pre-game. Finally, for the intelligent measure, the third period ingroup rating was greater than the first period rating. Only one period difference was found for the outgroup measure and that was for speedy where the second period rating differed significantly from all other periods. These results indicate that between-group differentiation followed the path of ingroup favoritism and not of outgroup discrimination, because outgroup ratings for these measures generally stayed at the same level whereas ingroup ratings followed a positive linear path.

Within-Group Similarity

To examine the attributions of similarity of players on the different teams across periods and games, diversity ratings were analyzed in a Game \times Period \times Group split-plot factorial design using a MANOVA procedure for the 10 dependent measures. Missing observations meant that the analyses were restricted to data provided by 33 subjects (11, 6, 9, and 7, respectively, for each game), thus perhaps lacking the power to detect certain differences. The results were treated as suggestive but not definitive.

The only significant source of variance was a main effect for Period, $F(30, 229) = 1.89, p < .005$. No support for an outgroup homogeneity effect was found because the variability in the characteristics of ingroup members was not judged to be greater than the variability of outgroup members. Univariate analyses were conducted for the 10 measures to determine which of these measures had significant period effects. Significant effects were found for the skilled, speedy, disciplined, and intelligent measures. The means associated with these effects are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Means of Diversity Ratings for Periods Collapsed across Games and Groups

Measure	Period				<i>F</i> (3, 87)
	Pre-game	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	
Skilled	3.24	3.05	2.64	2.52	8.70**
Speedy	3.36	3.00	2.70	2.65	6.79**
Disciplined	3.03	2.71	2.58	2.58	2.92*
Intelligent	3.20	2.89	2.61	2.65	5.42**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The first observation derived from Table 3 is that ratings of diversity generally decreased as the games progressed. Post-hoc tests of means using a Newman-Keuls procedure were conducted to identify significant differences between means. Pre-game ratings of diversity were found to be greater than second and third period ratings for the skilled and speedy measures ($p < .05$) and no other differences were found. The significant differences that were found, as well as the pattern of means on all 10 measures, suggest that group members were perceived as being more variable before the intergroup encounter began and that they became more and more similar on certain characteristics as the game progressed.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the processes of between-group differentiation and within-group similarity in a real and dynamic intergroup setting. The premise was that established social perception effects may not hold in a dynamic intergroup setting such as the sports arena.

Between-Group Differentiation

How does the process of between-group differentiation operate in a dynamic context focusing on real groups? Three points derived from the present results shed some light on this question. First, group differentiation was influenced by the reality constraints of the interactions (i.e., performance indicators) for most of the characteristics of comparison. Second, there were characteristics for which positive ingroup differentiation was occurring regardless of the events taking place within the interactions; these characteristics had negative connotations and also seemed less pertinent to performance. Finally, the data

indicated that a distinction could be made between ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination.

With respect to the influence of reality constraints on between-group differentiation, the interaction effects demonstrated that the process of differentiation varied with the periods and games. The correlations of objective performance measures (derived from the goals scored by each group) with the group differential scores indicated that differential ratings on key performance dimensions (skilled, cohesive, speedy, disciplined), as well as less pertinent dimensions (entertaining and intelligent) were positively related to the key events. These relationships demonstrate that partisans took into account reality constraints in their perceptions of teams, particularly for dimensions that seem more pertinent to successful performance. The greater the difference in score in favor of the ingroup, the more the ingroup was differentiated from the outgroup. More importantly, these results demonstrate the dynamic nature of between-group differentiation. This would have been lost if measures had been taken only upon completion of the games.

As indicated, there were notable exceptions to the influence of situational constraints on the process of between-group differentiation. For dimensions that were negatively evaluative (aggressive-dirty and arrogant), differentiation that made the ingroup positively distinct from the outgroup was maintained regardless of the events taking place during the game. Furthermore, these dimensions seem to be relatively unrelated to successful performance (i.e., they are not required for winning). Although this observation is somewhat post hoc, it is particularly relevant to the discussion of differentiation by Lemaine (1974) who demonstrated that groups at an obvious disadvantage will change the focus of intergroup comparison from formal established criteria to new criteria for evaluation. In the present context it was more difficult to justify superiority on dimensions pertinent to performance (e.g., skilled, speedy, cohesive) when the ingroup was not performing well. The spectators, however, chose to maintain their superiority on dimensions that seemed to be relatively independent of performance.

Further evidence for the maintenance of positive distinctiveness on dimensions that are more or less independent from performance were found in post-hoc analyses of ingroup-outgroup differences conducted for pre-game ratings only. Prior to each game, teams have a performance history that is reflected in the league standings. It was noted that the ingroup in this study was in the middle of the league hierarchy throughout the games that were played. Given this position, pre-game ratings of distinctiveness should nullify each other across games if partisans take into account their group's relative strength (stronger than two teams but weaker than two others). Significant differences favoring the ingroup were found, however, for the dimensions of aggressive-clean, $t(169) = 4.26, p < .01$; intelligent, $t(169) = 4.69, p < .01$; aggressive-dirty, $t(169) = -3.63, p < .01$; and arrogant, $t(169) =$

-3.31, $p < .01$. These results further demonstrate that positive distinctiveness is maintained on certain dimensions, even when history dictates that the ingroup is not superior to all of its opponents. Once again this distinctiveness was maintained mostly on dimensions that seem less pertinent to successful performance.

The final point with respect to between-group differentiation was that outgroup discrimination and ingroup favoritism can operate separately. The interaction effects between group and period highlighted this distinction. Between-group differentiation increased as the game progressed, becoming strongest upon completion of the game when victory of the ingroup was assured. Between-group differentiation, however, was the direct result of increased ingroup ratings: Positive distinctiveness was not achieved by giving the opponent lower ratings but by perceiving the ingroup as having improved on certain dimensions. By establishing differentiation through the process of ingroup favoritism (increasing ingroup ratings) and not through outgroup discrimination (lowering outgroup ratings), fans may be making the thrill of victory appear much sweeter, because winning came from within the ingroup and not because of external factors such as the poor play of the opponent. In attributional terms, this could be another example of the "self-serving bias" (Zuckerman, 1979). Given the scope of this study, it remains to be seen how the process of differentiation would develop in situations involving poor ingroup performance (i.e., losing).

Within-Group Similarity

The second social process examined in this study dealt with perceptions of within-group similarity. The laboratory studies summarized by Quattrone (1986) suggested that outgroup members generally are perceived as being more similar to each other than are ingroup members. That effect was not found in this study, possibly because of the dynamic nature of the intergroup context examined. A sporting event, like many competitive intergroup situations, usually provides a winner and a loser, thus making the notion of conflict omnipresent. A potential consequence of perceived conflict is ingroup cohesion and one way to express such cohesion would be to perceive strong ingroup similarity to maximize a feeling of unison.

Support for this rationale is limited, because it rests upon results in line with the null hypothesis (i.e., no effect for group). Furthermore, missing observations limited the number of observations for this analysis, which may have had insufficient power to detect certain differences. The reduced number of observations suggests that the measurement strategy for variability was not fully appropriate in this context. Nonetheless, the results indicated differences for ratings of variability across periods, where group members were perceived as being more similar on certain dimensions as the game progressed. This

latter finding runs counter to the belief that frequency of exposure leads to increased perceptions of variability (Quattrone, 1986) but bolsters the argument that conflict leads to greater perceptions of similarity. It is also possible that a narrowing of attention develops as the interaction approaches its conclusion, thus leading to an increase in the perception of similarity.

Although it is clear that more complexity (or diversity) exists for static social representations of ingroups when compared to representations of outgroups, it is suggested that conflict or competition in an intergroup context arouses a motivational bias that engenders the need for perceptions of similarity within the ingroup. Because social categorization is more likely to be called upon in dynamic intergroup contexts than in static settings, it is suggested that future laboratory experiments focusing on social representations should be designed to generalize to these dynamic contexts.

The present study, therefore, demonstrated the complex nature of social perception in an ongoing intergroup encounter. Naturally, care must be taken before generalizing from this study because it focused on only one type of dynamic intergroup interaction and because of the lack of control over the events taking place within the interactions. We believe, however, that the benefit of being able to test hypotheses concerning social perception in a dynamic intergroup context make it worth the challenge of trying to delineate the nature of social psychological processes in real life intergroup situations. Given the number of contingencies that can operate in intergroup interactions, there is a need to continue the research tradition established by Sherif and his colleagues and to look at basic intergroup processes, such as social categorization, within dynamic contexts.

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