

Dragging Down and Dragging Up: How Relative Group Status Affects Responses to Common Fate

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The authors examined whether status differences moderate the effects of common fate on subgroup relations. University students ($N = 103$) were led to believe that their subgroup was performing well (high status) or poorly (low status) relative to another subgroup. They were then told that the combined performances of the subgroups would have shared implications for their subgroup's welfare (common fate) or that there would be a direct link between their subgroup's performance and its welfare (no common fate). High-status (but not low-status) group members responded to the common fate situation by (a) decategorizing and (b) showing benevolence to the out-group. Results are discussed with respect to their implications for managing subgroup relations.

The idea of the “group” as a singular, homogeneous, undifferentiated entity is largely a myth. Most large-scale categories—nations, for example, or work organizations—are superimposed on meaningful subgroup differences, which in turn can be cross-cut by other identities defined by intragroup role assignments or by category memberships based on profession, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, ethnicity, and so forth. It is the diversity of identities within groups that can provide excitement, stimulation, and innovation (e.g., Van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003), but they can also represent a threat to the cohesiveness of the superordinate group (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). How to manage subgroup differences has be-

come a concern recently of many social and organizational psychologists (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Validzic, 1998; Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a; Gonzalez & Brown, 2003; Haslam, 2001; Van Leeuwen, Van Knippenberg, & Ellemers, 2003).

One frequently nominated strategy for helping subgroups get along is to introduce a sense of common fate—in other words, to invoke the notion that the subgroups' futures or rewards for performance are shared (Gaertner et al., 1999; Sherif, 1966). The power of shared rewards to promote intergroup cooperation is grounded in the fact that it does not rely on higher order principles of tolerance or altruism; rather, it trades on people's self-interest. The rewards people accrue on the basis of their subgroup performance are dependent on the performance of other subgroups, and so acts of sharing and cooperation service one's own group's needs and goals. In contrast, acts of inter-subgroup hostility and competition are damaging to the group's interests. In short, under conditions of common fate, subgroups have to pull together if they want to be successful.

Although the positive consequences of common fate are well documented, less attention has been paid to the potentially negative conse-

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quences of common fate. When the outcomes for both groups are intimately intertwined, the potential exists for dissatisfaction, particularly if one subgroup is contributing more to the shared outcomes than another. This is because the higher status subgroup (i.e., the subgroup that is contributing most to the superordinate group in terms of material outcomes or prestige) might feel as though it is being “dragged down” by the lower status subgroup. In this article we describe the results of a study in which we experimentally examined how status differences affect the experience of common fate for subgroup members. First, however, we review theory and literature regarding common fate, status, and social identity.

Common Fate

Common fate has been defined as representing “a coincidence of outcomes among two or more persons that arises because they have been subjected to the same external forces or decision rules” (Brewer, 2000, p. 118). One way of conceptualizing (and operationalizing) this construct is in terms of group members sharing the outcomes of their group’s performance. When rewards are structured such that all group members share equally the fruits of labor, this can be seen as a common fate situation. A number of studies have shown that groups governed by such reward structures tend to work together more cooperatively and productively than when individuals within groups are rewarded differentially (see, e.g., Deutsch, 1949; Rosenbaum et al., 1980; Worchel, Rothgerber, Day, Hart, & Butemeyer, 1998). Indeed, Lewin (1948) and Campbell (1958) saw common fate (or “interdependence of fate”) to be a critical precondition for groups to become real, in a psychological sense.

If common fate can help knit individuals together as groups, then it seems reasonable to suggest that common fate *between* groups should help build a sense of common in-group identity at the superordinate level. For example, in the classic summer camp studies, Sherif (1966) found that the tension that had been generated between two groups of boys at camp could be gradually decreased by introducing tasks that could be achieved only by combining their efforts (positive interdependence). In a similar vein, Gaertner et al. (1999) found that

the introduction of common fate (through the introduction of mutual or independent rewards on a task) was associated with lower bias in nonverbal reactions in response to in-group and out-group members’ ideas. Finally, Castano (2002) manipulated entitativity by stressing the fact that European countries share a common fate within the European Union. As expected, he found an increase in the level of identification with the European Union among the participants holding moderate and positive attitudes. Thus, the bulk of research suggests that common fate has generally positive consequences in terms of promoting intergroup harmony.

Status and Social Identity

It should be noted that the research conducted so far has focused on the effects of common fate with groups of equal status or in situations where status differences are not made salient. However, in real life, a situation of common fate between groups of equal status is more the exception than the rule. Little is known about the precise group processes that take place when common fate is invoked among groups of different status.

One theory that has much to say about intergroup status differences is social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see Hogg, 2002, and Turner, 1999, for recent reviews). Proponents of social identity theory argue that one of the fundamental motives underlying group behavior is the drive to see the in-group as positively distinct from other groups. Because a part of our self-concept is determined by our group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the relative status of the groups we belong to can have a significant impact on our self-regard. Consistent with the social identity perspective, higher group status is related to higher self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), stronger identification with the in-group (Ellemers, Doosje, Van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1992; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, De Vries, & Wilke, 1988; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990), and greater in-group favoritism (e.g., Brown & Wade, 1987; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1987).

It is often assumed that members of high-status groups tend to show more in-group bias than do members of low-status groups; however, this tendency is certainly not universal.

First, this effect emerges predominantly in studies that use minimal or ad hoc groups (Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992). When real-world groups are used, there is no systematic effect of status on intergroup bias. This might be because the effect of status on bias is moderated by legitimacy. If people feel as though their low-status position is illegitimate (e.g., the result of discrimination or disadvantage), then low-status group members typically contest the status hierarchy, resulting in enhanced intergroup bias. If, however, people feel their low-status position is legitimate, then they might concede their inferiority on status-defining characteristics and seek positive differentiation only on peripheral dimensions such as warmth and friendliness (Blanz, Mummendey, Mielke, & Klink, 1998; Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Alternatively, legitimately low-status group members might seek individualistic strategies to escape their negative social identity. They might do this by seeking membership of the higher status group or, if the intergroup boundaries are impermeable, by withdrawing psychologically from the group and focusing on their individual identities.

Common Fate as a Source of Threat for High-Status Groups

The benefit of high-status group membership is that it offers rewards in terms of material outcomes and/or prestige. However, in some common fate situations, these rewards are diluted by the performance of the lower status subgroup. Low-status subgroup members, on the other hand, are unduly rewarded courtesy of their association with the more successful subgroup. For low-status subgroups, then, common fate would seem to be a desirable state, because their access to rewards is enhanced. Their reaction to this would most likely be feelings of positivity toward the other subgroup and to the superordinate group as a whole.

For members of high-status subgroups, however, common fate would seem to be an undesirable state because their access to rewards is diminished.¹ There are three possible ways in which high-status group members might react to such a situation. One possibility is that, in line with research on identity threat (e.g., Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999),

members of high-status groups might show increased derogation toward the lower status out-group (*out-group derogation*). Although this strategy does not help improve the subgroup's objective position, it might be a natural response to a feeling of frustration and resentment at being dragged down by the lower status group.

A second possibility is that members of the high-status subgroup will extend support and help toward the lower status subgroup (*out-group benevolence*). This is a more effective strategy in terms of improving the overall position of the group and maximizing the subgroup's interests. By lending a benevolent hand to the weaker out-group, people can engage in a long-term strategy to maximize the shared outcomes for all.

A third possibility is that members of high-status subgroups might retreat from their group identities altogether (*decategorization*). Typically, decategorization is seen as a strategy used by members of low-status groups to escape their unsatisfactory group identity (see Ellemers et al., 1988, 1990). In this case, however, decategorization might be an adaptive response for members of high-status groups who, upon realizing that there is no direct relationship between the group's performance and the ensuing rewards, might decide that group identification is an unstable and unrewarding platform on which to build their self-concept. Their response to this might be to revoke their group memberships as an important aspect of self-definition and to rely instead on their personal identities. Although decategorization does not in itself lead to tangible rewards for group members, it

¹ Of course, our argument that status will moderate the effects of common fate makes sense only when common fate is operationalized in terms of shared outcomes that flow on from performance (as it was, for example, by Deutsch, 1949; Gaertner et al., 1999; Rosenbaum et al., 1980). However, it is possible that groups can experience a sense of common fate that is not framed in terms of performance. For example, Kramer and Brewer (1984) manipulated the common fate of participants by having subgroup members take part either in a single lottery that affected the superordinate group or in separate lotteries that affected only their subgroup. The study showed that common fate led to an awareness of a common in-group identity, which in turn helped group members behave more cooperatively in a common dilemma task. In situations such as this, in which the shared outcomes are determined by chance events, the relative performances of the subgroups would be irrelevant.

may reflect a psychological need to revert to a world in which individual rewards flow on from individual efforts, rather than being filtered through the performance of one's group. By decategorizing and focusing on their individual identity, people might be rejecting a level of self-definition at which there is a weak relationship between effort and rewards (the group level) and embracing a level of self-definition at which efforts and rewards feel more clearly linked (the individual level).

To date, there is no specific research that allows us to make predictions with regard to which strategy is likely to be preferred in a particular context. We should note, however, that we do not see the strategies to be mutually exclusive; rather, they meet different needs. Psychologically, decategorization can be seen as an escape strategy, which is attractive precisely because it offers an immediate cognitive response to an unsatisfactory situation. Thus, this strategy might satisfy psychological needs for well-being. Out-group benevolence, on the other hand, represents a more long-term, group-based strategy designed to change the structural relations between groups, thus satisfying a need for tangible rewards. It is conceivable, then, that people could engage in both strategies simultaneously, in the sense that they might endorse out-group benevolence as a long-term strategy for positive change, while at the same time buffering themselves psychologically from their existing situation by decategorizing. Similarly, it is conceivable that members of high-status subgroups might feel resentment and negativity toward the lower status out-group (out-group derogation) but, for utilitarian reasons, behave in a way that suggests benevolence.

The Current Research

In the current experiment, we used mathematics and social-science students as subgroups nested within the superordinate identity of University of Queensland (UQ). Maths-science and social-science participants were led to believe that their faculty area was performing either well (high-status condition) or poorly (low-status condition) relative to the other faculty area. In the no common fate condition, participants were led to believe that the welfare of each subgroup depended on the performance of their subgroup independently of the other

group's performance. In the common fate condition, participants were led to believe that the welfare of each group depended on the combined performance of both subgroups. Participants then completed a questionnaire in which they recorded their attitudes and intended behaviors toward each of the subgroups. Measures included indices of the extent to which they felt favorably toward each of the groups (intergroup evaluations), salience and identification at the subgroup and superordinate group levels, degrees of individualization, and degrees of intergroup competition (included here to test the out-group benevolence hypothesis).

In the no common fate condition, predictions were based on previous research on the effects of status differences on social identity and intergroup relations. Because the status differentials were presented to the participants as being legitimate and immutable, we expected that high-status group members would show stronger in-group bias on intergroup evaluations (Hypothesis 1a) and stronger subgroup identification (Hypothesis 1b) than would low-status group members.

Previous work on common fate suggests that the induction of common fate between two groups should raise the salience of the superordinate group and foster a sense of superordinate identification, thus fostering more positive evaluations of the out-group. On the basis of the rationale presented above, however, we might expect that common fate would have such positive effects only for low-status subgroup members. Specifically, we expected that low-status group members would express more positive evaluations of the out-group (Hypothesis 2a), stronger superordinate identification (Hypothesis 2b), and stronger superordinate salience (Hypothesis 2c) in the common fate condition than in the no common fate condition.

For high-status group members, we propose three possible responses to common fate. First, it could be that common fate will result in a psychological withdrawal from the group (decategorization), manifesting itself as lower levels of identification (Hypothesis 3a) and salience (Hypothesis 3b) at both superordinate and subgroup levels, and heightened levels of individualization (Hypothesis 3c). Second, it could be that high-status subgroup members will show less intergroup competition for resources when there is common fate than when

there is none (out-group benevolence; Hypothesis 4). Finally, it is possible that high-status subgroup members will show more negative evaluations of the out-group when there is common fate than when there is none (out-group derogation; Hypothesis 5).

Method

Participants and Design

Fifty-eight maths-science and 45 social-science undergraduate students from UQ participated in the study, for which they received experimental credit. The number of participants in each session ranged from 3 to 10. Participants were randomly assigned to the cells of a 2 (subgroup status: high or low) \times 2 (common fate: yes or no) between-subjects design.

Procedure

Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to examine their opinions regarding university life. It was explained to them that UQ was divided into two faculty areas—maths science and social science—and that some of the questions would relate to how they felt about each of these faculty areas.

Manipulation of Common Fate

In the *no common fate* condition, participants were told that every year the government gives a score to each faculty area (subgroup) based on the overall performance of students and staff in that faculty area. We told participants that separate scores were given to maths-science and social-science faculty areas and that these scores are used as a way of ranking faculty areas throughout Australia. These rankings are then published for the benefit of employees and prospective students. It was explained that the ranking is very important in terms of prestige and material outcomes. Students had better job opportunities if they graduated from a faculty area with a high ranking, and the faculty area could profit from a high ranking in terms of funding. It was emphasized that the score for one faculty does not affect the score for the other faculty.

We told participants in the *common fate* condition that the government gives a score to each

university based on the overall performance of its students and staff. Separate scores are given to maths-science and social-science faculties, and the score for each is averaged to form a single score for the university. The university could profit from a high score in terms of prestige, jobs, and funding, and these benefits would spill over to the two faculty areas equally.

Manipulation of Status

Participants were given a table with the overall performance scores and the attached ranking position for the previous year. Status of the subgroup was manipulated by giving either a high or a low performance score to each faculty area. In the low-status condition, we used a score of 52 points, which translated to a 25th ranking on the list of all of the Australian faculty areas. In the high-status condition, we used a score of 92 points, which translated to 2nd position on the ranking list. In the common fate condition, the average score for both faculty areas was 72 points, which translated to a 13th position on the ranking list for all Australian universities. For half of the participants the social-science faculty area was attributed the higher ranking, and for the other half the higher ranking was attributed to the maths-science faculty area. Depending on the participants' own faculty area membership, participants were thus allocated to high- and low-status conditions.

Questionnaire

The effectiveness of the status manipulation was checked using two items. One item measured the performance of participants' own group (faculty area): "The overall performance of my own group is . . ." (1 = *very poor*, 7 = *very good*). The other item measured the performance of the other group: "The overall performance of the other group is . . ." (1 = *very poor*, 7 = *very good*). By subtracting the second item from the first item, a score was created that indicated perceived relative status. The effectiveness of the manipulation of common fate was checked by asking the extent to which the performance of the other faculty area had implications for participants' faculty area with respect to (a) funding and (b) jobs (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*; $r = .75$).

Subgroup salience was measured with two items adapted from Hornsey and Hogg (2000b, 2000c): “While you were reading the information, how often were your thoughts drawn to your faculty membership?” and “While you were reading the information, to what extent do you feel you were responding as a student of your faculty area?” (1 = *not very often*, 7 = *very often*; $r = .65$). The same items were then rephrased and used to measure salience of the superordinate (university) group ($r = .55$).

Identification was measured using two items that were presented twice: once with respect to faculty area membership and once with respect to university membership. Participants rated whether the group they belong to is an important reflection of who they are and whether belonging to their group is an important part of their self-image (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $r = .74$ for faculty area and $.86$ for university). These items (adapted from Luh-tanen & Crocker, 1992) were selected because they tapped specifically into the extent to which the identity is seen to be relevant or central to the self-concept.

Intergroup evaluations were measured by assessing participants’ attitudes toward their own faculty area and toward the other faculty area on three items: “How positive are you about your faculty area/other faculty area?” (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), “How well do you think you can get along with members of your faculty area/other faculty area?” (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), and “What is your overall impression of your faculty area/other faculty area?” (1 = *not very favorable*, 7 = *very favorable*). Two scales were constructed: one that measured attitudes toward the other faculty area ($\alpha = .75$) and one that measured attitudes toward participants’ own faculty area ($\alpha = .78$).

Two items measured *intergroup competition*. Using 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), participants responded to the statements “If UQ were in the position to give the faculty areas extra money to do research, my faculty area should try to get as much of the money as possible” and “If UQ had plans to improve the facilities for students, my faculty area should work hard to get as much of these facility improvements as possible” ($r = .87$). Finally, two items measured *individualization*: “I do not consider myself as belonging to any group” and “I regard myself as a single

person rather than as a member of a certain group of people” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $r = .54$). Correlations among the key measures—broken down separately for each cell in the design—are presented in Table 1.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Members of the high-status group rated the performance of their own group to be superior to the performance of the other group ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.39$), whereas members of the low-status group rated the performance of their own group to be lower than the performance of the other group ($M = -2.82$, $SD = 1.34$), resulting in a significant difference between the status conditions in line with the manipulation, $F(1, 99) = 389.34$, $p < .01$. The analysis revealed no effect for common fate either alone or in combination with status. The manipulation of common fate also proved to be successful. Participants in the common fate condition considered the performance of the other faculty area to have more implications for their faculty area in terms of funding and jobs ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.41$) than did participants in the no common fate condition ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.50$), $F(1, 99) = 4.81$, $p < .05$. The analysis revealed no effects of status. Finally, no differences were found between the mathematics and social-science faculty area with respect to the manipulation checks of status and common fate.

Intergroup Evaluations

Intergroup evaluations were analyzed using a 2 (common fate: yes or no) \times 2 (subgroup status: high or low) \times 2 (in-group vs. out-group) mixed-design analysis of variance with repeated measures on the last variable. Overall, participants were more positive toward their own group ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 0.98$) than toward the out-group ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 0.92$), $F(1, 99) = 6.59$, $p < .05$. However, this main effect was qualified by an interaction with status, $F(1, 99) = 32.67$, $p < .01$. Participants were more positive toward their own group when it was high status ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 0.72$) than when it was low status ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.01$), $F(1,$

Table 1
Intercorrelations Among Measures Within Each Condition

Measure	Faculty identification	Faculty salience	Individualization	Intergroup competition
High status				
Common fate ($n = 22$)				
Intergroup bias	.42†	.33	-.54**	.07
Faculty identification		.19	-.58**	.04
Faculty salience			-.16	.01
Individualization				-.34
No common fate ($n = 29$)				
Intergroup bias	.45*	.33†	-.37*	-.01
Faculty identification		.13	-.29	.20
Faculty salience			.04	-.28
Individualization				.08
Low status				
Common fate ($n = 27$)				
Intergroup bias	.15	-.17	-.40*	-.02
Faculty identification		.29	-.28	-.11
Faculty salience			-.08	.13
Individualization				.35†
No common fate ($n = 25$)				
Intergroup bias	-.07	-.25	-.40*	-.43*
Faculty identification		-.06	-.11	.05
Faculty salience			-.09	.14
Individualization				.31

† $p < .10$ (marginally significant). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

99) = 26.81, $p < .01$. In contrast, participants were more negative toward the out-group when their in-group was high status ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.91$) than when it was low status ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 0.86$), $F(1, 99) = 7.28$, $p < .01$. When examining the difference scores (in-group minus out-group), it became clear that participants in the high-status condition displayed in-group bias ($M = 1.01$, $SD = 1.08$) whereas those in the low-status group displayed out-group bias ($M = -0.37$, $SD = 1.32$), a result that is consistent with Hypothesis 1a. However, inconsistent with Hypotheses 2a and 5, there were no effects of common fate on intergroup evaluations, either alone or in combination with status.

Identification

With respect to superordinate identification, only a main effect of common fate on the identification scale was found, $F(1, 99) = 4.82$, $p < .05$. Participants rated the UQ identity to be less important to the self-concept when there was common fate ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.88$) than when

there was no common fate ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.31$). The fact that this effect emerged for both high- and low-status participants suggests support for Hypothesis 3a but is inconsistent with Hypothesis 2b. In relation to the subgroup (i.e., faculty area) identity, only a main effect of status was found on identification, $F(1, 99) = 5.47$, $p < .05$. Consistent with Hypothesis 1b, high-status group members reported stronger identification ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.50$) than did members of the low-status group ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.39$).

Salience

On ratings of university salience, only an interaction between status and common fate was found, $F(1, 99) = 4.03$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 1). Tests of simple main effects showed that, consistent with Hypothesis 2c, members of the low-status group rated the university to be more salient when there was common fate ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.40$) than when there was no common fate ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.32$), $F(1, 99) = 4.56$, $p < .05$. However, for members of the high-

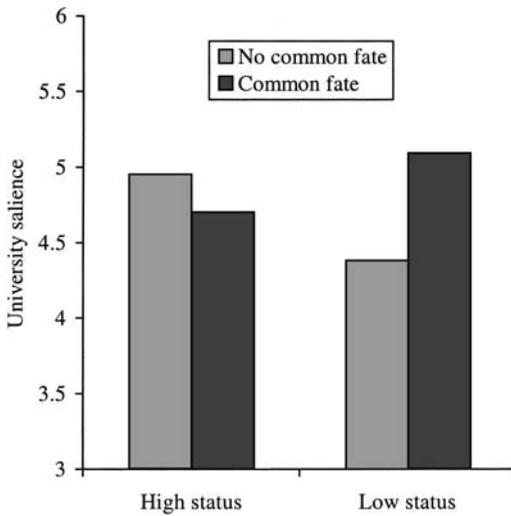


Figure 1. The effect of status and common fate on university salience.

status group, university salience did not differ as a function of whether there was common fate ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.00$) or not ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.03$), $F(1, 99) < 1$, *ns*. Furthermore, there were no differences between the high- and low-status groups in either the common fate condition, $F(1, 99) = 1.26$, *ns*, or the no common fate condition, $F(1, 99) = 3.00$, *ns*.

On ratings of faculty area (i.e., subgroup) salience, a main effect of common fate emerged, $F(1, 99) = 5.06$, $p < .05$. Overall, participants in the no common fate condition rated the faculty area to be more salient ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.17$) than did those in the common fate condition ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.42$). However, this main effect was qualified by an interaction with status, $F(1, 99) = 19.13$, $p < .01$ (see Figure 2). Consistent with Hypothesis 3b, for members of the high-status group the subgroup was more salient when there was no common fate ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 0.72$) than when there was common fate ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.30$), $F(1, 99) = 21.53$, $p < .01$. However, for members of the low-status group, subgroup salience did not differ as a function of whether there was common fate ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.32$) or not ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.38$), $F(1, 99) = 2.30$, *ns*. Furthermore, when there was no common fate, the subgroup was more salient for high-status participants than for low-status participants, $F(1, 99) = 8.25$, $p < .01$. When there was

common fate, however, the reverse was true, such that the subgroup was more salient for low-status participants than for high-status participants, $F(1, 99) = 10.92$, $p < .01$.

Individualization

Only an interaction between status and common fate was found on individualization, $F(1, 99) = 8.04$, $p < .01$ (see Figure 3). Tests of simple main effects showed that members of the high-status group displayed significantly higher levels of individualization when there was common fate ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.31$) than when there was no common fate ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.46$), $F(1, 99) = 6.47$, $p < .05$. This is consistent with Hypothesis 3c. For members of the low-status group, however, levels of individualization did not differ as a function of whether there was common fate ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.51$) or not ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.25$), $F(1, 99) = 2.12$, *ns*. Furthermore, when there was common fate, members of the high-status group displayed more individualization than did members of the low-status group, $F(1, 99) = 4.27$, $p < .05$. When there was no common fate,

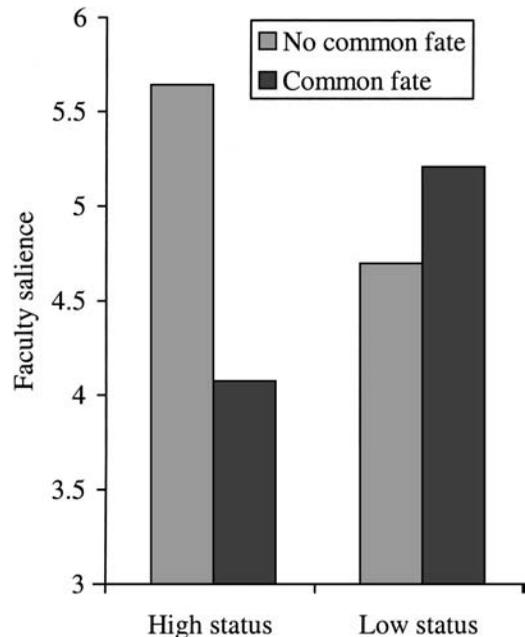


Figure 2. The effect of status and common fate on faculty salience.

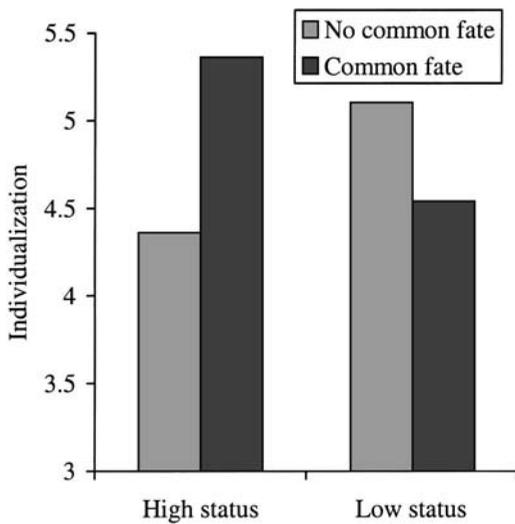


Figure 3. The effect of status and common fate on individualization.

however, there was a marginal tendency for the reverse effect to emerge: Low-status participants individualized more than did high-status participants, $F(1, 99) = 3.77, p = .055$.

Intergroup Competition

A main effect of status was found on intergroup competition, $F(1, 99) = 29.38, p < .01$. Participants in the low-status condition ($M = 5.08, SD = 1.19$) were more willing to engage in intergroup competition than were participants in the high-status condition ($M = 3.83, SD = 1.39$). However, the main effect of status on intergroup competition was qualified by an interaction with common fate, $F(1, 99) = 11.43, p < .01$ (see Figure 4). Consistent with Hypothesis 4, high-status group members were more willing to be involved in intergroup competition when there was no common fate ($M = 4.34, SD = 1.00$) than when there was common fate ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.55$), $F(1, 99) = 11.71, p < .01$. In contrast, for members of the low-status group, intergroup competition did not differ as a function of whether there was common fate ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.09$) or not ($M = 4.84, SD = 1.27$), $F(1, 99) = 1.80, ns$. Furthermore, when there was common fate, members of the low-status group were more willing to be involved in intergroup competition than were

members of the high-status group, $F(1, 99) = 38.86, p < .01$. In contrast, when there was no common fate, no difference was found between high- and low-status groups on this measure, $F(1, 99) = 2.19, ns$.

Summary

To summarize, low-status group members reported the superordinate group to be more salient when there was common fate compared with when there was none. However, they also reported weaker identification with the superordinate group under conditions of common fate. The common fate manipulation did not affect ratings of salience or identification with regard to the low-status participants' faculty area (the subgroup); neither did it affect low-status participants' ratings on intergroup evaluations, individualization, or intergroup competition.

Like low-status participants, the high-status participants also reported lower superordinate identification when there was common fate compared with when there was no common fate. In contrast to the low-status participants, however, high-status participants reported lower subgroup salience, higher levels of individualization, and less intergroup competition when there was common fate than when there

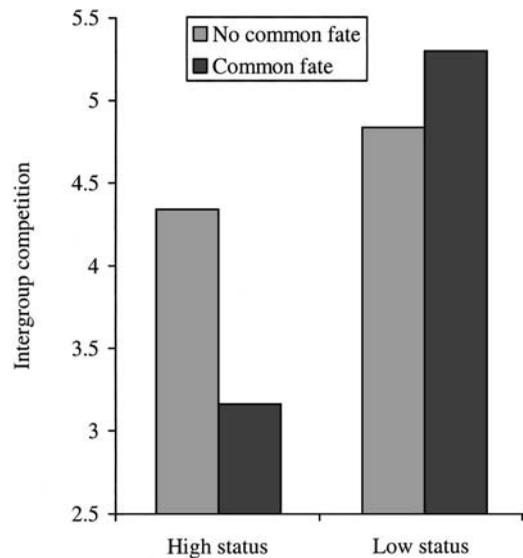


Figure 4. The effect of status and common fate on intergroup competition.

was no common fate. The common fate manipulation did not affect the high-status participants' ratings of intergroup evaluations, subgroup identification, or superordinate salience.

Mediational Analyses

There are two possible explanations for the observed effect of common fate on high-status participants' intergroup competition ratings. One explanation is that under conditions of common fate, the high-status group is motivated to demonstrate benevolence toward the weaker out-group. An alternative explanation, however, is that the low amounts of intergroup competition displayed by the high-status group members in the common fate condition are a manifestation of the fact that these participants were not operating at an intergroup level. Earlier, we stated that high-status group members reported relatively low levels of subgroup salience and high levels of individualization under conditions of common fate. It is possible, then, that the relatively low levels of intergroup competition are a result of this shift from group-based to individual-based self-definition. To test whether this is the case, we performed a 2×2 analysis of covariance on intergroup competition, with subgroup salience and individualization entered as covariates. The interaction effect remained highly significant, $F(1, 97) = 9.36, p < .01$, suggesting that the effects on intergroup competition cannot be explained as a result of decategorization per se. Instead, it appears that decategorization and out-group benevolence are independent (though complementary) strategies.

Discussion

One striking aspect of the results is that the induction of common fate did not succeed in raising the salience of, or the identification with, the superordinate identity. Indeed, there was some evidence for the opposite process. Under conditions of common fate, participants reported *less* identification with the superordinate group than when there was no common fate. Furthermore, the invocation of common fate did not affect inter-subgroup evaluations. Overall, on measures of positivity toward the subgroups, there was a general tendency for high-status people to show in-group bias and for low-status

people to show out-group bias, but the manipulation of common fate had no effect on these ratings. Thus, as predicted, there was no evidence in the current study that common fate was effective in building a sense of superordinate identification and improving intergroup relations.

The key difference between our study and previous research that has demonstrated the positive effects of common fate is that we used subgroups that differed in status, whereas previous research has used groups that were matched on status or for whom status differences were not salient (e.g., Castano, 2002; Dovidio et al., 1998; Kramer & Brewer, 1984). We argue that status is a crucial moderator of the effects of common fate. For high-status members, we expected that common fate would be viewed negatively because they are being afforded disproportionately low levels of reward relative to what they deserve. In short, they are being "dragged down" by the lower status group. We expected that high-status group members would respond to this by (a) showing heightened out-group derogation on attitudinal measures, (b) showing lower levels of intergroup competition with respect to resources (out-group benevolence), and/or (c) decategorizing. Overall, there was solid evidence for two of these strategies: decategorization and out-group benevolence.

Under conditions of common fate, high-status group members (but not low-status group members) reported lower levels of subgroup salience and an increase in individualization compared with when there was no common fate. We argue that this shift from group-based self-definition to individualized self-definition under conditions of common fate is a consequence of the fact that high-status subgroup members no longer perceive there to be direct rewards for their group's efforts. For this reason, group-based effort becomes less attractive, and people retreat to an identity for which they see a more direct and controllable relationship between effort and reward: the individual identity. Decategorization is an attractive solution to the dissatisfaction aroused by common fate because it is not inhibited by reality constraints and does not require a fundamental shift in the relationship between the groups; instead, it merely requires a psychological shift in the

level of inclusiveness at which people self-define.

It should be noted, though, that on some measures there was limited evidence of decategorization. Specifically, on subgroup identification and superordinate salience, the mean ratings of high-status participants were in the predicted direction, but the differences between the means were not significant. It should also be noted that overall, the levels of group identification reported here (operationalized as the centrality of the identity to the self-concept) lay beneath the midpoint of the scale, suggesting only moderate levels of identification. Given that these groups do not appear to be of strong relevance to the self-concept, it is perhaps unsurprising that decategorization should be such an attractive option for participants. It is possible that if the group was more central to the self-concept, then high-status group members would not decategorize in response to common fate but would instead pursue more group-based strategies.

Even in the context of the moderate levels of identification reported in the current study, the results on the intergroup competition measure suggest that high-status group members have not given up altogether on a group-based solution to the problems posed by common fate. High-status group members were less keen to engage in competition with the out-group for resources when there was common fate than when each group could determine its own fate. The implication of this effect is that high-status subgroup members are trying to lend a helping hand to the weaker out-group. By extending benevolence in terms of funding and facilities, it could be that the high-status subgroup is trying to improve the performance of the weaker subgroup, presumably with the ultimate aim of improving the university's overall ranking. Whereas decategorization is an easy way of psychologically minimizing the discomfort implied by common fate, intergroup benevolence is a more ambitious, group-based strategy designed to improve performance in the long term. Interestingly, the effect of common fate on competition was not mediated by indices of decategorization, suggesting that benevolence and decategorization are independent strategies that coexist within the minds of high-status group members.

We anticipated that although high-status group members might be prepared to show some benevolence to the weaker out-group in terms of resources, the invocation of common fate would provoke resentful attitudes toward, and negative evaluations of, the out-group. There was no evidence for this, however. One reasonable explanation for this is that high-status group members opted for individualization as a way of psychologically escaping the dissatisfaction associated with common fate, and so group-based derogation was not a salient (or constructive) option for them. A second possible explanation is that our participants saw the relative performance of the faculty areas to be a function of organizational priorities, management decision making, and/or resource allocations. This might lead participants to feel the status division is (a) largely out of the hands of rank-and-file members and (b) not necessarily a reflection of the group's lack of effort or ability. If, however, people felt as though their group was being dragged down by a lack of effort or ability on behalf of a lower status out-group, then it would be understandable if this led to increased resentment and negativity toward the out-group. Attributing performance to external factors might also help explain the fact that low-status group members did not demonstrate increased out-group liking in the common fate condition. If group members could reasonably attribute the status position of the groups to something internal, such as effort or ability, then perhaps low-status group members would feel more positively toward the better performing out-group under conditions of common fate. The potential role of attributions in moderating the effects of status and common fate would be an interesting avenue for future research.

As discussed above, the invocation of common fate did not make low-status group members feel more positively toward the higher status out-group. But did it succeed in building a sense of common identity at the superordinate level? Here, the evidence is mixed. As predicted, low-status participants reported the superordinate identity to be more salient when there was common fate than when there was not. However, contrary to predictions, low-status participants (like high-status participants) reported *weaker* identification with their superordinate category when there was common fate than when there was not. At this point we

should emphasize that salience was operationalized as the extent to which the category was cognitively accessible in the situation. Just because a category is cognitively accessible (or readily brought to mind) does not necessarily imply that the category will be internalized as an important part of the self-concept. It could be that low-status group members in the common fate condition became very conscious of the impact their poor performance was having on the common good (manifesting itself as high levels of superordinate salience) but at the same time felt a degree of discomfort or shame about this knowledge (manifesting itself as low levels of superordinate identification). Whatever processes are in operation here, the overall picture with regard to how common fate affects low-status group members is less positive than we had anticipated. The hypotheses for this study were built around the premise that the invocation of common fate would have negative psychological consequences for high-status group members but positive psychological consequences for low-status group members. However the expected payoff for low-status group members is not in evidence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, there is no evidence that common fate has overtly destructive consequences for groups that differ in status, at least in terms of hostile intergroup attitudes. There is evidence, however, that the invocation of common fate results in high-status group members detaching from their group identities, which is not always a desirable outcome. Furthermore, there is a conspicuous lack of evidence that common fate improved intergroup relations or promoted a shared, superordinate identity. What conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from this?

Work on social loafing has highlighted the need for individuals to feel that they get a direct reward for their contribution to group effort (see Karau & Williams, 1993, for a review). We would lean toward a similar recommendation at the subgroup level. Sharing rewards equally among subgroups (common fate) might help create a sense of superordinate identity only if each subgroup is performing at a relatively equal level. If, however, there are vivid differences in performance, the potential exists for

dissatisfaction or detachment on behalf of the better performing subgroup. A response to this might be to create provisions for subgroups to get differential rewards depending on their subgroup performance. This does not necessarily imply that rewards are not shared at all; indeed, in many contexts, some degree of interdependence and common fate among subgroups is inevitable. However, within these reality constraints, it might be possible to allow for better performing subgroups to receive a degree of acknowledgement or recognition for their superior efforts, whether that be in terms of prestige or material rewards. Even if the difference in rewards is small, it might be the type of symbolic act that allows high-status subgroups to remain invested in their group identities and to feel as though group-based effort is worthwhile. The notion of differential rewards also complements recent literature that emphasizes the identity benefits that ensue when subgroup differences are acknowledged within a superordinate category (Egins et al., 2002; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000c, 2002; Van Leeuwen et al., 2003).

The notion of differential reward has obvious benefits for high-status subgroup members, but the benefits for low-status subgroup members are less clear. Is it possible to devise a strategy that has positive consequences for members of both groups? One possibility is that the status differences between the groups are acknowledged at the outset, as soon as the group's goals are linked. For members of the high-status group, this strategy implies a secure high subgroup status, which might enhance their motivation to help the other group learn from their expertise and abilities. In this way, they know that their high status is recognized, and they can strengthen this position in the future by undertaking a helping, expert role. For the low-status group, it is clear from the beginning that their initial status position is not ideal, but they have a chance to upgrade this status by learning from the expertise of the high-status group.

Of course, such a process could be helped considerably if subgroups could be differentiated on more than one status dimension. For example Brown and Wade (1987; see also Deschamps & Brown, 1983) demonstrated that intergroup relations are optimal when subgroups feel as though they can specialize in areas of expertise that are separate but complementary. In this way, the initial status differ-

ences between the groups should be seen as additive rather than subtractive in terms of the group's overall performance. Alternatively, one subgroup might be seen to be performing in a superior way on performance-related dimensions, but the other group could be seen to be contributing on a more social dimension. By stressing the differences on two separate dimensions, subgroups can benefit from each other without losing their distinctiveness (see also Dovidio et al., 1998).

It should be noted, however, that the recommendations made above are predicated on the notion that the status differences between the groups are legitimate. If there is a perception that the status differentials were built on an illegitimate basis, then acknowledging the "superior" performance of the high-status group or asking the low-status group to learn from the expertise of the high-status group may simply lead to a more acute awareness of the injustice of the status differential. In turn, this might lead to increased in-group bias among low-status members (see Ellemers et al., 1993; Hornsey, Spears, Cremers, & Hogg, 2003; Jost & Major, 2001, for discussions of how perceptions of legitimacy affect intergroup relations among groups with low power or status).

In summary, the current study demonstrates one boundary condition to the notion that common fate can promote intergroup harmony. We would argue that such a strategy is less likely to be effective when there are salient status differences between the subgroups. This is not a trivial boundary condition, because it is relatively rare that subgroups are perfectly matched in terms of status. We argue, however, that the invocation of common fate might still be beneficial if (a) there is some provision for differential reward to be allocated to the subgroups, (b) the status differences are openly acknowledged at the outset, or (c) the subgroups are shown to have separate but complementary areas of expertise. By systematically examining these questions, a deeper insight can be achieved with regard to the psychological consequences of common fate among real-world groups.

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