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The Centrality of the Self-Control Ethos in Western Aspersions Regarding Outgroups: A Social Representational Approach to Stereotype Content

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Abstract

This theoretical paper presents a cultural-level analysis of stereotype content concerning derogated outgroups in the West. It proposes that the ethos of self-control is a key source of widespread thinking about outgroups, and thus a key factor in the social construction of certain groups as superior and others as inferior. Drawing on the social representations approach, the paper complements and extends existing analyses of stereotype content that stem from social identity theory and the structural hypothesis. By emphasising cultural values, particularly that of self-control of the body, it casts light on neglected sources of stereotype content such as its emotional, visceral and symbolic roots. Furthermore, by exploring further dimensions of the self-control ethos – linked to the mind and to destiny – the paper shows that derogated outgroups are often symbolised in terms of contravention of multiple aspects of self-control. Finally, the paper contributes to a cultural understanding of social exclusion by investigating the origin, production and diffusion of the symbolisation of out-groups in terms of deficits in self-control.

Key words: Self-Control; Stereotype Content; Social-Representations; Cultural values; Out-group derogation

The Centrality of the Self-Control Ethos in Western Aspersions Regarding Outgroups: A Social Representational Approach to Stereotype Content

The contents of thought involved in prejudicial and stereotyped thinking have been under-theorised in social psychology (Brown, 2000; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002; Moscovici, 1984; Tajfel, 1981). The goal of this paper is to provide a fresh look at the substance of thinking about commonly derogated outgroups[1] in the West with a view to developing a theoretical framework concerning the centrality of the self-control ethos. Thoughts about derogated outgroups are seen as a manifestation of widespread values. Individualism is a core value in western culture and one of its key components, self-control, has become an organising principle of personhood (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). The paper argues that a noteworthy aspect of widespread thinking about outgroups pivots around the violation of the self-control ethos. By associating outgroups with a paucity of self-control, dominant thinking transforms the ethos into an instrument of exclusion and derogation.

A key task of the paper is to demonstrate how aspersions pertaining to lack of self-control construct a range of groups as less valued and respected than those seen to embody self-control. People from non-western cultural contexts, for example, are often construed by westerners as lacking the essential cultural attributes of self-control and individual autonomy (Said, 1978; Sanchez-Mazas, 2004; Staerklé, 2005). Similar aspersions are ascribed to women (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998), children (Chombart de Lauwe, 1984) and mentally ill people (Jodelet, 1991). Other instantiations of lacking self-control are seen in the association of gay men with promiscuity (Herek, 1998), obese people with weakness of will power (Crandall, 1994), drug users and smokers with connotations of addiction (Echebarria, Fernandez & Gonzalez,

[1] By 'outgroups', the paper refers to any social group or category that is marginalised, subjugated or excluded in relation to dominant groups. At its most virulent end, such a group is the target of bigotry, whereas a weaker form manifests in dislike, discredit or disrespect. This conceptualisation of outgroups differs from one in which ingroup and outgroup are relationally and contextually defined and seen in relative terms depending upon the perspective of the perceiver (e.g., heterosexuals form an outgroup from the point of view of homosexuals).

1994) and poor people with lacking self-sufficiency and control over destiny (Feather, 1999; Gilens, 1999). Therefore, analysing stereotype content in terms of violation of the self-control ethos has the potential to integrate seemingly arbitrary thought content into a common conceptual framework.

The paper builds on previous social psychological work on stereotype content, but approaches it from the perspective of a social representations framework (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995; Deaux & Philogène, 2001; Jodelet, 1989; Joffe, 1999; Moscovici, 1984; 1988). This framework is unique in its emphasis on the link between thought content and cultural knowledge. It conceptualises how ideas and values that circulate in the social environment are internalised by individuals, thereby becoming part of their explanations of social phenomena. It ascribes a major role to the symbolisation of abstract knowledge – such as the self-control value – by concrete and figurative entities, such as outgroups. Stereotype contents can be conceptualised as manifestations of social representations of self-control. They do not merely express, but also purvey and promote this ethos.

As its point of departure the paper provides a brief description of two major approaches to thought content concerning derogated outgroups, namely social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) and the structural account (Fiske et al., 2002). Having highlighted key limitations, a social representational analysis of stereotype content is developed.

Social identity theory and stereotype content

During the past decade the contents of judgements concerning social groups have attracted renewed research interest (Augoustinos, 2001; Fiske et al., 2002; Reicher, Hopkins & Condor, 1997). After several decades of marginalisation, stereotype content has been rediscovered within social psychology and its role in shaping different forms of prejudice reasserted (Brown & Turner, 2002; Duckitt, 2003). Much of this recent work is based on social

identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) and its offshoot, self-categorization theory (e.g., Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994).

Tajfel (1969) introduced the notion that the psychological process underlying stereotypical judgements and prejudice is categorisation: individuals use categories to make sense of their everyday experiences and to bring coherence to their understanding of the world. The attributes associated with social categories are neither neutral nor arbitrary, but are derived from socially meaningful dimensions of comparison such as competence or honesty. Much research has demonstrated that stereotype content forms on the basis of dimensions that promote a sense of positive distinctiveness in relation to outgroups in a given comparative context (see Brown & Turner, 2002; Oakes et al., 1994). As a result, stereotype content concerning a particular social group is not seen as a fixed set of attributes, but as selectively shaped by the context of its application. However, in light of the enduring and pervasive nature of prejudice against certain outgroups context may not tell the whole story. Indeed historical stability may be a defining feature of stereotype content (Billig, 2002).

The emphasis on the contextual nature of stereotype content as well as location of such content in individual minds in contemporary social identity and social categorisation theories obfuscates some of the early thinking in this area. Tajfel saw social categories as longstanding cultural constructions serving political and ideological functions rather than as individual mental representations (e.g., Tajfel, 1984). In this vein Billig (2002) states that “Individuals do not create their own categories but assimilate the categories that are culturally available, thereby accepting culturally determined patterns of prejudgement and stereotyping” (p. 175). Thus, particular categorisations are embedded in wider ideological patterns of belief. Similarly, Oakes, and her colleagues (1994) stress the importance of an “interpretative matrix” that informs the content of thinking about groups. This matrix includes “cultural and religious beliefs, social representations, political and social ideologies and more formal, scientific and philosophical

conceptions." (p. 118). Notwithstanding the SIT literature's regular reference to the importance of such knowledge in stereotype formation, many contemporary uses of SIT strip away such factors focusing only on more temporary comparison situations.

Another shortcoming of the social identity approach to stereotype content is the absence of a conceptual distinction between mild and innocuous forms of prejudice on the one hand and hostile prejudice and bigotry on the other (Billig, 2002). This limitation reflects the theory's original intention to provide a cognitive account for the near universality of prejudice in intergroup relations. It obscures the emotional aspects inherent in strong forms of prejudice, among them hatred, fear, envy and contempt. These emotions are not "free-floating psychological impulses, lying behind ideologies or social categories" (p.184). Rather, they "exist within socially shared explanations, blaming, accounting and so on." (p. 184). The emotional aspects of socially circulating explanations will form a focus of the approach to stereotype content adopted in this paper.

Stereotype content as a reflection of structural intergroup relations

The second major contemporary approach that addresses stereotype content is centred on how perceived structural relationships between groups shape stereotypes. These models (Alexander, Brewer & Hermann, 1999; Fiske *et al*., 2002; Glick & Fiske, 1996) posit that two basic dimensions - competence and warmth – lie at the core of stereotype content. Perceptions concerning the degree of competence and warmth possessed by different groups are determined by the relative status of the group about which the stereotype is held, and by the type of relationship that links the perceiver and the target group. Higher, versus lower, status people are perceived as competent; groups competing over resources are seen as cold, whereas a sense of a co-operative relationship elicits perceived warmth. As a consequence, the competence and warmth dimensions are often negatively linked to one another and most forms of prejudice result

from some combination of the two. Envious prejudice is typically directed towards high-status and competitive groups who are perceived to have low levels of warmth and high levels of competence (e.g., business women, Jews). Paternalistic prejudice is targeted at low-status groups who are dependent on a high-status group (e.g., housewives, migrant workers) and is constituted by stereotype content that combines low levels of competence with high levels of warmth.

Under certain circumstances the dimensions of competence and warmth are positively related. When a social group is perceived as both incompetent and cold the type of prejudice that ensues is contemptuous. This combines two negative perceptions. It can thus be contrasted to paternalistic prejudice, which rewards a given outgroup's association with a positive stereotype dimension, and to envious prejudice where the positive dimension is a reflection of the groups' dominant position in the social hierarchy. Thus, contemptuous prejudice is targeted at groups whose collaboration is not needed (e.g., welfare beneficiaries or asylum seekers); such groups are perceived as "useless" for the functioning of society, and thus attract the strongest, most stigmatizing and most unambiguous form of prejudice.

This model provides understanding of why stereotype content regarding a variety of low status groups is similar: since the structural relationship between groups is similar, so too are the corresponding stereotypes. The model therefore sees stereotype content as a function of interdependent and hierarchical group relations rather than as inherent to specific groups, or as varying as a function of comparative context. Furthermore, it challenges the assumption that a uniformly negative set of associations must exist for prejudice to occur. Rather, combinations of positive and negative associations can produce envious and paternalistic forms of prejudice. Both justify the social status quo (Fiske *et al*., 2002).

The dimensions of perceived competence and warmth and their variants are undoubtedly important for understanding stereotype content. Yet the focus on contents that derive from structural features may obscure other possible sources of stereotype content. The

structural features on which the model is based—status and competition—both refer to economic interdependence and power relations between groups. Status relates to a group's degree of material resources and power, while competition denotes the nature of the relationship between groups where valued resources are at stake. To claim that these two structural features account for stereotype content of most, if not all outgroups, implies that all groups can be classified according to these materialist criteria.

Certain groups, such as homosexual people, do not appear to be defined by way of such criteria. This is borne out empirically in models such as that of Fiske *et al.* (2002) where homosexuals are consistently located around the centre of the competence and warmth dimensions, suggesting that they cannot be readily classified as warm, cold, competitive, or co-operative. Fiske *et al.* (2002) readily admit that no satisfactory solution to this problem can be offered within their model. Similar difficulties in classifying prejudice towards gay people are evident in studies of essentialism (e.g., Haslam, Rothschild & Ernst, 2002). Furthermore, certain key targets of derogation such as drug users, smokers and obese people are absent from such research. The inability of models that claim to cover most, if not all, outgroups to account for stereotype content pertaining to a number of crucial outgroups points to the necessity of looking beyond existing structural accounts of stereotype content.

By failing to explore stereotype content beyond the warmth and competence dimensions, and their manifestations in paternalistic, envious and contemptuous prejudice, a number of the components with which outgroups have been regarded historically are overlooked. Much like contemporary social identity and categorisation theories fail to account for bigotry and hatred (Billig, 2002), structural models obscure the symbolic components of stereotype content. Some of the most severe forms of prejudice of the past centuries have symbolised certain categories of humans as animals and insects: Jews as vermin, bacteria and maggots in key Nazi texts such as *Mein Kampf* (Bar-Tal, 1990); black people as animal-like in the history of western

writings on Africa (see Joffe, 1999 for overview); and gypsies as akin to wild animals in contemporary Europe (Chulvi & Pérez, 2003). Thus symbolisation of certain groups in terms of non-human entities forms a key aspect of stereotype content. Such a connection or affinity between the nature of animals and humans is an example of the objectification process in social representations: social groups are figuratively construed as wild, dangerous or disgusting animals. This links with Douglas' (1966) hypothesis that relates disgust to the violation of boundaries, focusing on the boundary between animals and humans (Royzman & Sabini, 2001). Displays of our animal origins occasion disgust: disgust is a defensive emotion guarding against recognition of our animality (Haidt, McCauley & Rozin, 1994). A pervasive response to that which is considered disgusting is recoil. When exercised in relation to people this has much in common with a stigmatising response in which marked people are objects of social disgrace.

In raising the issue of stigma concerning certain outgroups one becomes aware of a further shortcoming of the social identity and structural models: they do not refer to the visceral elements of stereotype content. The stigma literature (e.g. Jones *et al.*, 1984; Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl & Hull, 2000) indicates their potential power. It establishes that the contravention of aesthetic norms (such as being obese, ugly or smelly) is a key dimension that marks individuals and groups out for social rejection. It also indicates that the dimension of `peril' or fearfulness that certain groups represent, either directly in terms of associations to contagious illness or to dangerous animals, or indirectly by breaching prescriptive values, plays a key role in their stigmatisation.

In sum, while research inspired by the social identity and the structural relations approaches has greatly increased knowledge about stereotype content it yields an incomplete and sometimes misleading picture of outgroup derogation. It tends to underplay the visceral, emotive and symbolic underpinnings of stereotyping and prejudice. In keeping with much contemporary psychology, the concepts of stereotyping and prejudice become rather sanitised. Aspersions cast

concerning the dirt, perversity and ugliness of certain groups, and the morals and symbols that surround these qualities, are difficult to access yet lie at the heart of lay notions of which groups are to be reviled. Widely circulating thinking about the gypsy, the paedophile, the obese person and the barebacking gay man, to name but a few, does not fit neatly into contextual comparison or warmth-competence models because positive differentiation and/or materialistic motives are not the primary drivers of these aspersions. The models neglect the relative stability of much stereotype content over time, and are devoid of a theoretical account of its social and cultural origins.

The paper departs from the key models to concentrate on the cultural values that feed stereotype content. In order to enhance understanding of widely circulating thinking about derogated outgroups the focus shifts to the variants of the self-control value and the aspersions they cast. From the perspective of social representations theory, stereotypes of derogated outgroups are derived from cultural values which sustain the social order and justify existing social arrangements. This view shares with SIT a concern for the role played by values in maintaining ingroup cohesiveness (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Yet, unlike SIT, derogated outgroups are not regarded as the only providers of positive distinctiveness to majority groups. Instead, from the social representations vantage point the focus is on social groups construed as perilous to the existing social order. Stereotypes carrying symbolic meanings are promoted - mainly by dominant groups - in order to bolster cultural values. These values, in turn, buttress systems of power and domination. Thus the social representations approach to stereotype content highlights the transmission and the social-cultural function of knowledge rather than the psychological mechanisms underlying stereotyping per se.

Self-control and the social representation of derogated outgroups

Each era produces prescriptive values that define acceptable and desirable ways of thinking and behaving. A body of social psychological writing attests to the role played by self-

control in contemporary western societies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Sampson, 1988). This line of thinking suggests that while self-control and self-restraint are valued across cultures, their form and cultural importance are distinctive in the West, where individuals, as opposed to groups, families or cultures, are seen as the basic entity shaping destinies and organising social life (Moghaddam & Studer, 1998). Crucially, being a socially respected 'self' western style requires maintaining active control over one's desires, emotions and actions. Self-control acts as a master value in societies rooted in an individualist ideology (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). Self-control is an organising metaphor of personhood, and a need for control is essentialised as a core feature of a positive personal identity.

Since control is part of shared thinking about the self it serves as a standard against which people are assessed and assess themselves (Oyserman & Markus, 1998, p.115). Representations derived from the self-control ethos become the basis for widely circulating thinking about outgroups. For example, high-status individuals are perceived as more self-controlled and less determined by their group membership than low-status individuals (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1998). In other words, individualism and self-control are desirable attributes associated with socially valued and successful groups and individuals (Beauvois, 2005).

While it is widely acknowledged that stereotype content reflects cultural values (Doise, 1978; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Biernat, Vescio, Theno & Crandall, 1996), little is known about how particular values become linked to particular outgroups in people's minds. The link between cultural values and outgroup derogation can be studied by way of a social representational approach (see also Augoustinos & Walker, 1995). The primary concern of this approach is to explain the making and products of common-sense. It aims to systematise how material that lies in people's taken-for-granted thoughts comes to be there, the specific form it takes, and its consequences for the way they understand their social environment (Doise & Staerklé, 2002). A

number of the approach's principles are drawn upon to facilitate exploration of how the self-control value shapes social representations of outgroups.

Mass media play a key role. They construct common sense concerning outgroups by disseminating representations on which lay people draw when forming representations of social problems. Phenomena such as criminality, poverty, deviance, and illness call for an understanding. They tend to be constructed in terms of responsibility and blame, which, in turn, are associated with social groups (Moscovici, 1984). They raise questions concerning who is dangerous and threatening, and who should be avoided. Implicit cues for attributing blame and responsibility are provided when particular groups are overrepresented in the media with respect to specific societal problems, such as overrepresentation of black people in relation to images of poverty and welfare in the US media (Gilens, 1999), and of mentally ill people in relation to images of violence and criminality in the US and British media (see Philo, 1996).

According to the social representations framework, people assimilate and elaborate what is conveyed to them by entities such as the mass media via the process of objectification (see Moscovici, 1984; 2001). Objectification is sufficiently similar to the notion of symbolisation that it can be thought of as such. Symbolisation involves making something abstract more easy to grasp by transforming it into a more concrete entity. This can occur in a number of ways (see Moscovici & Hewstone, 1984): concepts can be substituted with images, and abstract ideas can be substituted with individuals or groups. Images, individuals and groups get attached to various facets of the self-control value in western cultures. The rather abstract value dimension thereby becomes tangible.

Abstract cultural values become easier to grasp when their opposite or contrary meaning is made salient. Reasoning through opposites is an effective way to understand social phenomena (Markovà, 1987, 2003). If some groups symbolise high levels of self-control others, in turn, represent a deficit thereof. In other words, the value of self-control becomes a meaningful

criterion of categorisation that differentiates value-conforming and value-violating individuals. The value becomes salient via those who deviate from it, and facilitates the construction of outgroups from them (Biernat *et al*., 1996). Thus aspersions of a self-control deficit become a powerful basis for outgroup derogation. The value becomes a major tool for the production of social exclusion (see Sanchez-Mazas & Licata, 2005). Associating outgroups with the antithesis of the control ethos maintains the dominance not only of the value but also of the groups seen to embody it (Mouffe, 1993; Said, 1978).

Studies concerning the role of the self-control ethos in outgroup derogation may eventually be subjected to meta-analysis. This will require the existence of a greater body of empirical work. Prior to this, the wealth of social scientific knowledge that pertains to the ethos requires showcasing. Since the self is a multifaceted and complex entity, the self-control ethos is constituted by a variety of domains. Three aspects are distinguished: body, mind, and destiny. These domains of selfhood appear to form the basis of much derogative outgroup stereotype content. Although representations of control over each domain overlap to some extent, they are described separately for conceptual clarity.

In each domain self-control provides a ‘normative benchmark’ that prescribes a desirable or superior mode of conduct and thought. The claim in this paper is that social representations concerning lacking self-control over body, mind and destiny underpin many of the contents of stereotypes and prejudice. This material has a tendency towards stability because it is rooted in deep-laid cultural values, although social representations are dynamic inasmuch as they live via the activities, tensions and conflicts of groups and individuals (Markovà, 2000). The focus is on body control since this dimension is neglected in other accounts of stereotype content (e.g., Fiske *et al*., 2002).

Self-control over the body

Self-control over the body refers to the regulation of the expression of body-linked activities, ranging from those connected to the more ‘instinctive’ or ‘natural' urges (e.g. sexual and hunger-based) to those associated with addictions (e.g. smoking). Valorisation of such control is reflected in many major preoccupations of contemporary society, such as health, sexuality and sport. This section will demonstrate that social representations concerning body control propagate images of in-control-bodies associated with moral rectitude and civility and out-of-control bodies linked to their converse.

The current form of the value of body control in the West can be traced back to Protestantism which fostered a self preoccupied with discipline. A secular process has worked alongside this religiously shaped force. In his now classical study of the *Civilising Process,* Elias (1939/2000) posits the development of an increasing tendency towards self-control over the body in Europe, since the early Middle Ages. People have always been aware of rules concerning the body, of the ‘done thing’ in their milieu but this has changed through the ages. In Europe behaviours linked to the body (e.g., when, where and how one blows one’s nose, scratches oneself, has sex, urinates and so on) have become more tightly regulated. The civilising process increasingly inhibits people bodily, and changes the threshold of repugnance, fostering increasing feelings of shame and disgust with the body. People clothe and screen their animal selves, and demand higher levels of order and restraint.

This developing restraint expresses itself in new meanings attributed to the body in the contemporary West, where it is linked, in particular, to individual health. Crawford’s (1985, 1994) work is pivotal regarding the link between body control and health. Health has become a cardinal value in western society (Crawford, 1985), a metaphor for self-control. Health is not seen to result from good luck, heredity or upbringing. Rather, health is a goal in itself. It is a state that must be achieved by way of health promoting behaviours. This has been explicit in key

policy documents since the 1970s, where the chief causes of illness are seen to stem from personal behaviour or 'lifestyle' (see DHSS, 1976 regarding Britain; Nelkin & Gilman, 1988 regarding the United States). Individuals are implored to take full responsibility for their health-related destinies, manifest in the explosion of health promoting campaigns espousing the 'you are responsible for your own health' ethos (see Naidoo, 1986; Joffe, 2002). Exposure to such campaigns, in addition to other health-linked media content and peer pressure (e.g., to be thin), steeps westerners in the body control ethos. Like the operation of the Protestant Ethic in relation to work (see below), the health ethic is linked primarily with self-control but also with the set of related concepts of self-discipline, perseverance, self-denial and will power.

There is a progression in the thinking that arises from this value, from seeing health as resulting from self-control, to a moral verdict concerning the inability of the unhealthy to exercise it. Healthy behaviour becomes a moral duty, and illness a moral failing of the individual. In middle-class social networks, in particular, self-control—expressed via self-discipline and performed via the making of a healthy body—is a ritual whereby a positive sense of identity is forged and justification of disdain for the non-healthy augmented. Thus the body is the symbolic terrain upon which desire for, and display of, self-control are enacted (Crawford, 1985).

The duty to control the body, rather than to indulge it, permeates the contents of the aspersions made about a range of groups. Firstly, body weight is currently a major symbol and sign of self-control. Weight facilitates instant assessment of a person's health status. The thin person symbolises the mastery of mind over body, signals virtuous self-denial. By way of contrast, the fat person embodies loss of control and moral failing in terms of sloth and gluttony. Crandall (1994), for example, has demonstrated that anti-fat attitudes in the US are accounted for by a cultural preference for thinness, which signals control over one's bodily desires, and the belief that weight is necessarily volitionally controlled.

A further group implicated by this value are gay men. In part, this is related to health in the links made between this group and AIDS, with its attendant, associations to out-of-control, unhealthy sexuality and drug use (e.g., Crawford, 1994; Joffe, 1999). Yet it is not in terms of health issues alone, that this group's body control is morally judged. The group's lifestyle, bodily enacted, was seen as value-violating (Stangor & Crandall, 2000) way before the AIDS epidemic. The promiscuous lifestyle ascribed to gay men implies excessive sexual activity when compared to a more restrained norm. The gay lifestyle is represented as contravening a social order that enshrines the morality of moderate, often monogamous heterosexuality. Set in the context of a normative lifestyle, gay men are seen as a moral threat to body control. Supporting this association is the finding that attitudes towards homosexual people are more positive when their sexual orientation is seen to result from innate, genetic factors, rather than deliberate choice (Tygart, 2000). Thus, people who have 'chosen' to become homosexual are seen as more threatening than those who are gay by 'nature'. Such a choice flies in the face of the more normative codes of restraint, institutionalised in marriage. While this norm has evolved, both within 'straight' and gay communities, and the history of homophobia is linked to a complex array of issues, nevertheless out-of-control sexuality remains a key feature of the lexicon of images that characterise the gay male group.

It is important to note that lack of control is not always linked to negative aspersions, and can become a desirable attribute in contexts where 'instincts' and pleasures are valued, such as in certain music and dance cultures. Therefore, the valuing of bodily discipline can clash with emphases on pleasure, well-being, and release from control (Jodelet, 1984; Crawford, 1994), which are intrinsic to a culture of consumption. Health is a key arena in which the tension between these contrary values are played out. Not only are bodily conditions such as obesity associated with a lack of control, others, such as certain cancers, are linked with too much control, an inability to release stress and the subsequent development of illness (e.g., see Sontag,

1979). However, it is generally out-of-control states – such as smoking and obesity – that are linked with lower status. For example, in western society the wealthy distinguish themselves by being thin (Symons, 1979) and smoking is increasingly associated with being from the lower socio-economic groups (Jarvis & Wardle, 1999).

Mention of economic status harks back to the structural model of stereotype content. While body control has economic correlates, the status linked to it is not necessarily associated with competition over resources. At various moments in history body control has symbolised cultural as opposed to socio-economic status. Indeed, the Nazi glorification of the Aryan body provides a key moment in which cultural superiority was objectified in controlled, disciplined and healthy bodies. Conversely, cultural inferiority was and continues to be associated with those embodying impulsive, 'uncivilised' or even savage conduct (e.g., the cannibal; see Jahoda, 1999). Controlling one's body equates to upholding a moral duty to tame the 'natural' and disorderly state of the body. Protestantism did not just promote discipline, it (and its Calvinist branch, in particular,) promoted a horror of disorder. Thus, the link between body control, social order and culture is crucial in explaining the origin of morality-based social representations of outgroups, and thereby, of corresponding stereotype content.

Self-control over the mind

A second subset of the self-control ethos underpinning outgroup derogation relates to control over one's mind. In this domain self-control versus the lack thereof rests largely on the distinction between rational-scientific and irrational-emotive thinking. A competent self is a rational, logical one with mastery over his/her cognitive faculties. One key instance of this is exemplified in scientific thinking, which is seen as a more advanced and optimal mode of cognitive activity than non-scientific or 'lay' thinking. It is associated with technical mastery and control over the environment, epitomized by the ever-growing field of modern technology (Moghaddam & Studer, 1998). Its status is demonstrated via the power given to the scientific

'expert' in the West. Lay awareness of scientific competence is increasingly fostered by use of 'scientific experts' in the mass media (e.g., see Wagner & Kronberger, 2001). Experts are called upon to ensure the 'objectivity' of knowledge on publicly debated issues. They are considered the guardians of truth against emotional and irrational decisions and perceptions, superstition, mysticism, and religion. While trust in experts has diminished over past decades (see Beck, 1986/1992), they hold out the hope of creating value-free knowledge based on 'facts'.

A further symbol of self-control over the mind is the 'democratic citizen'. Western political superiority rests upon the social representation of the 'democratic citizen' who makes informed and rational political decisions by voting and electing (Staerklé, Clémence & Doise, 1998; Staerklé, 2005). As a counter-example, in colonial discourse Orientals were described as incapable of self-government on grounds of their lack of autonomy and rationality (Said, 1978). This is echoed in nineteenth century colonial texts that classified races according to typologies in which black people lacked control over their intellects, while white people had vigorous cerebral functioning (Gobineau, 1859). Further groups represented as counter-normative, in this context, include women (Glick & Fiske, 1996), children (Chombart de Lauwe, 1984), and people with mental illnesses (Jodelet, 1991). Women, for example, were denied political rights on grounds of arguments of incompetence and lack of rationality (see Voet, 1998) well into the twentieth century.

For some of the groups targeted for derogation based on lacking self-control over the mind the degree of imputed lack of control is relatively mild, and their thinking is seen as socially appropriate (e.g., women, children). With respect to other groups, however, such representations set them apart from society and establish stereotype content that portrays them as threatening and frightening (e.g., the mentally ill).

Self-control over destiny

A third domain of the self-control ethos fundamental to outgroup derogation relates to control over one's destiny. This facet of the value prescribes self-reliance in the sense that individuals are expected to make their 'own living' without dependence on others for support. Achievement motivation and entrepreneurial behaviour are seen to benefit both the individual and society (McClelland, 1961) via economic growth and development. 'Getting ahead', promoting oneself and competing for resources are closely related to the Protestant work ethic, which prescribes acquisition of goods, through work, as the ultimate purpose of life (Weber, 1904/5). Accumulation of resources is proof of virtue and autonomy; productivity and paid labour are deemed the primary means to achieve self-control over destiny.

In contrast, the representation of the violation of destiny-control includes a lack of motivation and laziness, coupled with an inability to be self-sustaining and an incapacity for long-term planning. Those who lack destiny-control are seen as free riding, abusive of common resources, and parasitic. Groups that symbolise the transgression of self-control over destiny are the poor in general, and the unemployed in particular. Able-bodied welfare recipients are among the most stigmatised groups, especially in North America (Fiske et al., 2002; Gilens, 1999). Discredit of such groups stems from a representation that they prey on others rather than being self-sufficient.

As with the other facets of the self-control ethos, media coverage plays a central role in the diffusion of social representations concerning destiny control. These representations, in turn, construct stereotype content. Research has demonstrated that news reports presenting stereotypical images of the poor shape public understanding of poverty (Gilens, 1999; Iyengar, 1991). Specific examples of poor people found in news stories have a more lasting impact on beliefs than do abstract, aggregate statistics of poverty (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). This finding is in line with a social representational approach to stereotype content in its suggestion that concrete

examples of value-violating people in news reports play a key role in shaping stereotype content. Since people reason more easily with concrete, vivid examples in mind than with abstract and conceptual information (Moscovici & Hewstone, 1984), tangible examples provide the opportunity to approach a complex phenomenon such as poverty with simplified, figurative representations. Thus, stereotype content can be seen as the outcome of an objectification process in which poor people become symbols of a lack of control over their destinies. Being in control of one's destiny is a mark of virtue, whereas lack of control is less a symbol of societal malfunction than of failing as an individual.

In sum, social representations built upon the violation of the three dimensions of the self-control value capture a considerable amount of the variation of stereotype content associated with commonly derogated outgroups. Perceived body control refers to values of morality, civility and discipline, thought to underpin an orderly and well-behaved society. Concomitantly, lack of body control yields stereotype content of immorality, decadence, dirt and "uncivilised behaviour" which threaten the social order. Perceived control of the mind relates to the values of competence and rationality which are associated with high status positions in society. Lack of such control, in turn, elicits representations of incompetence, emotionality and irrationality associated with low status positions. Finally, perceived destiny control applies to achievement, self-sustainability and entrepreneurship which are seen as essential qualities for the economic development of a society. Failure to control one's destiny generates images of laziness, undeservingness and parasitism.

Societal functions of value-based outgroup representations

The permutations of the self-control value shape representations in which some individuals and groups are deemed virtuous and others deviant. Social representations of groups designate dominance and supremacy in accordance with their compliance to the value, and subordination and deviance for non-compliance. Thus, representations of lacking self-control

fulfil societal functions by promoting the stability and legitimacy of existing social arrangements. If representations of lacking body control symbolise erosion of the moral rules underlying an orderly society, then they reinforce a conception of a civilised and well-behaved society that must be protected against elements that undermine it. If representations of lacking control over mind stand for irrationality and lack of ability, then they promote beliefs that current social arrangements are fair since the competent occupy high-status positions involving responsibility and authority. Finally, if representations of a deficit of destiny control epitomize laziness and a lack of motivation, then they justify social inequality and hierarchy by accounting for poverty as an individual's failing. The three aspects of representations of lacking self-control have in common that individuals and their deficiencies are made responsible not only for personal failings (e.g. becoming ill, overweight or poor), but also for societal problems such as crime, incivility, and poverty.

Since one of the central interests of dominant groups is to maintain their position in society, they promote representations that justify the status quo in order to keep subordinate groups in their place (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Social representations derived from the self-control ethos are likely to play a key role in this endeavour. Through media control and access, dominant groups have the power to impose hegemonic representations that categorise and depict minority groups in ways that are self-serving (Gitlin, 2000). In this sense, widespread representations of minority groups are created, developed and disseminated as a function of the interests of dominant groups.

In shaping the social representation of a group's violations of the self-control ethos, dominant groups may have a strategic interest in maximising purported value violations. For example, when welfare recipients are depicted as not only poor, but also unhealthy, insane and dirty, aspersions concerning lack of self-control over body, mind and destiny work in concert. Historically, perhaps the most comprehensively researched blended value violations are evident

in the extensive body of research documenting representations of the African in the 19th and 20th centuries. McCulloch's (1995) analysis of the writings of western psychiatrists working in Africa in this period shows that the African emerged as savage, lazy, violent and sexually promiscuous, the very antithesis of the European with his order, reason, moral standards, discipline, sexual continence, and altruism. Via such social representations the psychiatrists, who reflected the values of the western cultures in which they were embedded and shaped dominant views of outgroups, expunged their associations with a lack of control over mind, destiny and body. The African came to symbolise everything the dominating European did not want to be. Similar blends of value violations lie in contemporary aspersions regarding gypsies (Chulvi & Pérez, 2003) and aboriginal people in Australia. The latter are viewed as lazy, unproductive, uncivilised ('hunter-gatherers') and dirty (Augoustinos, 2001).

These examples illustrate that blended value violations may further legitimise derogation of outgroups. They augment the symbolic distance separating outgroups from acceptable and desirable behaviour, and thereby add force to their exclusion. Bigotry and other hateful forms of prejudice are likely to be characterised by such blends since they maximise differentiation and are built upon powerful emotional underpinnings (Billig, 2002).

Limitations and future issues

Due to space constraints, the analysis of the role of the self-control ethos in the social construction of stereotype content is necessarily limited to specific aspects of a complex societal phenomenon. The emphasis has been on *lacking* self-control as a source of stereotype content. Future work might explore whether excessive control also provides the basis for such content? With too much control one becomes neurotic, cold, anorexic, inhibited, over-driven or greedy. Interestingly, those who contravene the ethos by pursuing body, mind and destiny control with too much, rather than too little, zeal are generally associated with dominant groups. Not surprisingly then, the 'control freak' with his/her 'will of steel' can symbolise health and success,

whereas the control deficient are derogated and excluded for their failures. Thus, social representations of high-status groups include excessive control – such as that surrounding the super-rich and the super-thin. Therefore, excessive control is not linked to social exclusion. This suggests that it is not moderation that is valued in relation to body, mind and destiny, but restraint.

The present analysis does not touch on individual and group-based variation in the endorsement of the self-control ethos. Cultural values produce a set of common reference points – social representations - through which social groups are conceived at certain points in time. They provide people with the 'raw material' on which they can rely to judge and evaluate their social worlds (see Billig *et al.*, 1988), and tend to appear necessary and natural (Oyserman & Marcus, 1998). Yet, future work will need to explore how individuals position themselves differentially towards them in accordance with their identities.

The analysis also fails to address possibilities for change of the stereotypes informed by the self-control ethos. The diffusion and assimilation processes concerning social representations make for some change over time. In addition, the history of minority influence research has demonstrated that change of cultural values can be brought about by minority influence (Moscovici, 1976). Moscovici's work on social representations and minority influence reflects a duality between social and cultural stability (social representations) and change (minority influence). Examination of changing stereotype content from the perspective of minority influence goes well beyond the scope of this paper.

Furthermore, by focusing on how dominant groups think about outgroups the paper fails to consider how the targets of discrimination represent other groups. Since issues of power form a key underlying concern within this paper, the representations of dominant groups held by low-status outgroups are not germane. They do not lie at the root of social exclusion.

Finally, the paper is (purposefully) Eurocentric. Self-control forms an important feature of culture beyond the West. However, its manifestation and consequences in the West forms the focus of the paper for particular reasons. In western industrialised societies self-control functions as an ideological tool, a key element of political rhetoric, a common-sense way of understanding social relations. While self-control certainly plays a central role in moral philosophies around the world, the meanings and social justificatory function of it outlined in the paper are particularly developed in the Western world.

Concluding remarks

This paper has proposed that the self-control value provides a lens for understanding social representations of outgroups and outgroup stereotype content. It has aimed to demonstrate that a range of such contents taint derogated outgroups with qualities that justify their low status and social exclusion, while simultaneously bolstering cultural values and dominant groups' sense of superiority. By analysing the contents of outgroup derogation from a social representational perspective the paper has endeavoured to complement and extend existing approaches to stereotype content in a number of ways.

Firstly, it establishes a link between cultural values and outgroup derogation. The values that organise social life underpin the common knowledge whereby individuals think about other groups. In other words, cultural values become materialised in representations of outgroups. The value of self-control, in particular, is a powerful source of social representations concerning outgroups and these inform stereotype content. Such content is rather stable over time but, since it circulates by way of communication processes, is also dynamic. The origin of such common knowledge in cultural values, and its production and diffusion, particularly by way of the mass media, is neglected in the key existing approaches. Attention to this production process is vital in understanding how outgroups come to be seen as value-violating entities.

This focus not only complements the SIT and structural accounts, but the examination of widespread thinking and stereotype content begins to redress a lack in the social representations approach. Issues of power have been underplayed in approaches concerned with the content of lay understandings (Joffe, 1995; Jovchelovitch, 1995). Yet the paper attests to the role of powerful groups in the social construction of representations of derogated outgroups. The analysis suggests that the interests of dominant groups become seamlessly incorporated into a set of tacit assumptions concerning derogated outgroups. In a rather circular process, social representations not only perpetuate themselves, but also endorse the power of the groups that embody the values that underpin them. Group-related thinking has too often been explored without reference to who becomes powerful and who gets excluded by way of social representations.

Secondly, the approach adds a dimension to understanding stereotype content by paying heed to the visceral, emotive and symbolic aspects that underpin certain stereotypes. Absent from the dominant models of stereotype content is the widespread thinking associated with the out-of-control body - deemed ugly, repulsive and immoral for its obesity, addiction, and/or promiscuity. Consequently, feelings of disgust, repugnance, hatred and shame move centre-stage. Exploration of the body control ethos, in particular, compensates for neglect of the visceral, emotive and symbolic aspects of stereotype content in existing empirical work.

The social representations concept is useful in this complex area of study inasmuch as it is a `sensitising concept' (Blumer, 1969, Liu, 2004). A sensitising concept provides guidance in approaching empirical instances. It does not supply a prescription of what to see but, rather, suggests directions in which one might look. Stereotype content may lend itself to being studied in this way because of its very nature and complexity.

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