
The Emergence of Homegrown Stereotypes

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Homegrown stereotypes are generalizations that groups develop about their own typical characteristics. They are a distinct class of in-group stereotypes in the contexts and processes that give rise to them, as well as in their consequences for individual group members. The authors develop the concept of homegrown stereotypes and locate the origins of these stereotypes in self-presentation processes. They discuss the accuracy of these stereotypes and consider their similarities to and differences from a number of related phenomena. An examination of homegrown stereotypes highlights the importance of taking into account the impact of in-group, as well as intergroup, dynamics on the production of stereotypes.

In the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, many Americans did something they had never done before: They displayed an American flag. It began when rescue workers at the Pentagon unfurled a giant American flag on the damaged side of the building. Soon, flags were appearing everywhere—on lampposts, in kitchen windows, on office bulletin boards, on car antennae, on shirt fronts and jacket lapels. People displayed the flag to signal patriotism, sympathy for the victims of the attacks, and solidarity with their neighbors, coworkers, and fellow citizens. These flags, then, were self-presentations directed to the in-group and perhaps also to the self. They were interpreted, by the media and by Americans themselves, as evidence that Americans are a very patriotic and unified people.

In short, the flying of flags in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks gave rise to a stereotype of Americans—a homegrown stereotype that arose through processes that occurred within the group itself. In their attempts to be good people and good citizens, Americans behaved in ways designed to signal those qualities: They displayed the American flag. As they witnessed a sizable proportion of their fellow citizens enacting this same behavior, they developed a homegrown stereotype of the in-group—a stereotype of Americans as patriotic.

In this article, we develop the concept of homegrown stereotypes and outline the psychological processes that produce them. We argue for the importance of distinguishing this particular type of in-group stereotype from all others on two grounds. First, the antecedents of homegrown stereotypes are distinct. Their origins lie in self-presentations that are enacted by a sizable proportion of a group's members. These presentations may be motivated by a desire to present oneself as a good person according to

the values of the broader society or as a good group member according to the values of a particular social group. When self-presentations take a common form (like flag flying), they give rise to homegrown stereotypes. Second, the consequences of homegrown stereotypes are distinct. Because these stereotypes reflect group members' attempts at self-presentation, they represent desired self-images. Thus, they serve as important standards for self-evaluation. Indeed, these stereotypes can be significant sources of comfort or alienation for individual group members, depending on how the individuals see themselves in relation to the stereotypes. We consider each of these properties of homegrown stereotypes in some detail below.

We used the following method of analysis: We based our criteria for claiming the existence of a stereotype on recent work that has assessed both in-group and out-group stereotypes (Judd & Park, 1993; Judd, Ryan, & Park, 1991). This research has examined stereotypes about the traits and attitudes of group members; we added nonobservable behaviors to that list. The bulk of the studies we reviewed were not specifically designed to assess stereotypes and, as a result, did not include many of the measures typically used to this end. However, most included a percentage estimation task, in which participants estimated the percentage of group members who had a given trait, engaged in a given behavior, or endorsed a given position. Thus, we took as evidence of a stereotype estimates that the majority of a group's members were characterized by an attribute, endorsed a particular position, or engaged in a behavior. We augmented these quantitative indices with qualitative accounts when available. Finally, in line with previous studies (e.g., Judd et al., 1991), we used participants' self-ratings as a benchmark against which to compare their estimates of the group. We begin by situating homegrown stereotypes in the context of research on in-group stereotypes more generally. This research reveals some of the important properties of homegrown stereotypes but leaves a number of others undocumented.

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In-Group Stereotypes

Historically, social psychologists have focused their investigations on the stereotypes people hold about other groups, to the comparative neglect of those they hold about their own groups. However, in recent years, a number of researchers have extended their analyses of out-group stereotypes to include in-group stereotypes as well. These investigations have yielded three major conclusions about in-group stereotypes. The first is that they, like their out-group counterparts, are inferred from observable behavior. For example, Eagly (1987; Eagly & Steffen, 1984) has amassed considerable support for this claim in her research on gender stereotypes. She has maintained that gender stereotypes derive from observations of women and men behaving within the context of their social roles. Consistent with this claim, several studies have shown that the observation of men in the role of breadwinner leads both women and men to see men as competitive and the observation of women in the role of childbearer leads both women and men to see women as nurturing (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; see also Hoffman & Hurst, 1990). Diekmann and Eagly (2000) recently extended this analysis to account for change, as well as stasis, in stereotype content. These findings support the idea that people observe members of their own groups just as they observe members of out-groups and that they develop stereotypes accordingly.

This conclusion applies to homegrown stereotypes as well. They, like other in-group stereotypes, are inferred from observable behavior. But the type of behavior on which they are based has not been well captured by previous analyses. Specifically, homegrown stereotypes are inferred from strategic behavior, not role-constrained behavior. It is interesting that both social roles and individual motives can constrain behavior, such that observers—even participant observers, as is the case with in-group stereotypes—are inclined to draw general inferences about the group. Nonetheless, the source of the constraint is quite different in the two cases.

A second conclusion that has emerged from the literature is that in-group stereotypes develop under conditions that heighten the salience of group identity. This insight comes from research in the traditions of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). According to these theories, self-conceptions incorporate both personal and social identities. Personal identities refer to self-conceptions that define the individual in relation to other individuals. Social identities refer to self-conceptions that derive from membership in emotionally significant social groups. When circumstances render a particular group membership, and hence a particular social identity, salient for individuals, those individuals self-stereotype. Specifically, they think of themselves, along with the other members of their group, as having characteristics that are normative within that group (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Simon & Hamilton, 1994; Spears, Oakes, Ellemers, & Haslam, 1997). This process gives rise to in-group stereotypes.

Homegrown stereotypes also depend on the salience of group identity, but that is not all they depend on. Because these stereotypes are based on public self-presentations directed to the in-group, they also depend on the visibility of in-group members. The ability of in-group members to observe each other is critical in two respects: First, it shapes which aspects of their social identities people express (Reicher, Levine, & Gordijn, 1998). People do not simply act out of a social identity; they are also very cognizant of how their actions are likely to be received (Ng, 1980; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995). The presence of in-group members thus has a determining effect on the contents of homegrown stereotypes. Second, mutual observability enables people to see their peers' self-presentations. Without in-group members to observe, they would not have the evidence on which to base homegrown stereotypes.

As an illustration of these points, consider what an American who was living overseas in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks may have experienced. The attacks may very well have heightened the salience of her identity as an American, leading her to think about herself and other Americans in terms of the qualities that are prototypical of the group. This is self-stereotyping. The attacks would not, however, have prompted her to develop a homegrown stereotype of Americans as patriotic. In the absence of any Americans to whom to present herself, she would have been unlikely to display an American flag (Reicher & Levine, 1994), and, in the absence of any (flag-flying) Americans to observe, she would not have had any reason to think of the group as especially patriotic.

A third conclusion that has emerged from the literature is that in-group stereotypes are more accurate than out-group stereotypes on various measures of accuracy. For example, in a study of business majors and engineering majors, Judd et al. (1991) found that, for judgments of out-groups more than in-groups, participants exaggerated the extremity of the groups' characteristics (exaggeration) and overestimated the percentage of group members who conformed to the stereotype (overgeneralization). Participants also showed less sensitivity to between-attributes differences in judgments of the out-group than of the in-group. In a review of 10 studies for which they were able to assess stereotype accuracy, Judd and Park (1993) found consistent evidence that out-groups are perceived more stereotypically and with greater exaggeration, prejudice, and overgeneralization than are in-groups.

It is difficult to make general statements about the accuracy—even the relative accuracy—of homegrown stereotypes. Judd and Park's (1993) analysis is consistent with the notion that people have more information about in-groups than out-groups and therefore have a better database from which to infer the traits and attitudes of in-group members. The first part of this statement certainly applies to homegrown stereotypes: People have a lot of information about the in-group in cases in which these stereotypes arise. However, the information does not always make group members accurate. Often they misinterpret why people are doing what they are doing—that is, they misunder-

stand what the behavior signifies. In these cases, homegrown stereotypes are systematically inaccurate. In other cases, these stereotypes can be quite accurate. Consider, for example, the homegrown stereotype of Americans as patriotic. This stereotype was inferred from a strategic behavior that was motivated by the desire to express precisely this quality. Therefore, it was probably, on the whole, quite accurate, in the sense of being well-calibrated to what individual citizens would say about themselves. We return to the question of accuracy later.

In summary, the literature on in-group stereotypes provides a useful but incomplete framework for analyzing homegrown stereotypes. What it is lacking is an account of the self-presentation processes that give rise to these stereotypes. To illustrate these processes, we draw on empirical examples taken from the literature on pluralistic ignorance.

Pluralistic Ignorance

Pluralistic ignorance is a phenomenon characterized by the belief that one's private attitudes and judgments are different from those of others, even though one's public behavior is identical (Miller & McFarland, 1991; Prentice & Miller, 1996). It originates in the same self-presentation processes that give rise to homegrown stereotypes. When people try to present themselves as good people or good group members in front of their peers, they often act in ways that belie their private sentiments. A self–other discrepancy emerges because people take their peers' similar behavior at face value—that is, they assume that it provides an accurate reflection of their peers' private sentiments and therefore that those sentiments must differ from their own. A homegrown stereotype also emerges because the uniform behavior of group members prompts an inference about the characteristics of the group.

An example of the co-occurrence of pluralistic ignorance and homegrown stereotypes comes from our investigation of college students' attitudes toward campus alcohol practices (Prentice & Miller, 1993). In one study, we asked a cross-section of Princeton undergraduates to indicate their own comfort with the alcohol-drinking habits of students at Princeton and to estimate the comfort of the average Princeton undergraduate. Students rated themselves as significantly less comfortable with campus drinking practices than they estimated the average student to be, suggesting that their beliefs were characterized by pluralistic ignorance. We also asked them to estimate the variability of their peers' attitudes by bracketing the two scale values between which the attitudes of 50% of students would fall. Students estimated the distribution of attitudes toward drinking on campus to have a mean of approximately 7 on an 11-point scale (1 = *not at all comfortable* and 11 = *very comfortable*), with an interquartile range from 5 to 9. Thus, they held a homegrown stereotype of students as moderately proalcohol.

A second example that illustrates the co-occurrence of pluralistic ignorance and homegrown stereotypes, as well as the self-presentation processes that underlie both, comes from Schanck's (1932) classic study of social norms and

religious identities in the pseudonymously named community of Elm Hollow. The influential Methodist church in Elm Hollow strongly prohibited cardplaying, drinking alcohol, and smoking. Not surprisingly, there was widespread public support for these church-based social norms. Schanck's investigation, however, revealed that private support for these norms was much weaker than the public support suggested. Indeed, Schanck reported that over his extended stay in the community, he himself played cards, drank hard cider, and smoked with many, if not most, residents—although always in the privacy of their own homes. Moreover, Schanck's survey of people's private attitudes and practices supported his observation that there was little private support for the public norms. His survey also revealed, however, both pluralistic ignorance and a homegrown stereotype of the group: The residents assumed that their fellow community members were truly religious—that they actually believed in and followed the dictates of the church.

These examples highlight the connection between homegrown stereotypes and pluralistic ignorance; however, the two phenomena have no direct causal link to each other. Sometimes self-presentations are consistent with private sentiments, in which case homegrown stereotypes develop in the absence of pluralistic ignorance. We believe that the patriotism example with which we began this article falls into this category. Moreover, sometimes people internalize their self-presentations, such that pluralistic ignorance dissipates but the homegrown stereotype remains. Our research on students' attitudes toward campus alcohol practices provides an example of this dynamic (Prentice & Miller, 1993). In one study, we twice assessed students' attitudes toward drinking, once at the beginning of the fall semester and again at the end of the semester. In the first assessment, the results looked very much like they had in our cross-sectional study: We found a sizable self–other difference, with students estimating that other students were more comfortable with campus drinking practices than they themselves were. In the second assessment, we found a marked gender difference: Women still showed the self–other discrepancy, whereas men did not. Instead, men rated both themselves and other students as comfortable with campus drinking practices, suggesting that they had internalized their self-presentations. Thus, by the end of the semester, men were no longer experiencing pluralistic ignorance, but they still saw the campus as proalcohol.

Even when self-presentations begin as an accurate reflection of private sentiments, they may not remain accurate. Thus, a homegrown stereotype that once provided a valid reflection of group members' sentiments may, over time, give way to pluralistic ignorance. An illustration of this point is provided by studies of racial attitudes during the 1960s (O'Gorman, 1988). The civil rights movement, along with other social forces, shifted the private attitudes of White Americans toward integration long before there was any corresponding shift in social norms and public behavior (Breed & Ktsanes, 1961; Fields & Schuman, 1976; O'Gorman, 1975; O'Gorman & Garry, 1976). The

result was a widening gap between what White individuals felt and what they believed other White individuals felt.

Consider, for example, Fields and Schuman's (1976) survey conducted in the 1960s with White Detroit homemakers. These investigators asked their participants to indicate how they would respond to a hypothetical situation in which a six-year-old daughter asked her mother if she could bring another girl who was Black home from school. The participants were asked to choose from the following options: (a) "It is never okay to play with Negroes," (b) "it is OK to play only at school with Negroes," or (c) "it is OK to play at home with Negroes" (Fields & Schuman, 1976, p. 430). In addition to answering for themselves, they were asked to indicate how "five or six of their closest neighbors" (p. 430) as well as "most Detroiters" (p. 430) would respond. The majority of participants (76%) indicated that they would express the most liberal sentiment (the third option) but that only a minority (33%) of their neighbors and typical Detroiters would do the same. Here, we have a case of consistent self-presentations producing stable homegrown stereotypes in the face of substantial private attitude change.¹

In summary, homegrown stereotypes can occur with or without pluralistic ignorance. They depend only on in-group members presenting themselves uniformly enough to warrant a group-level inference. When those self-presentations belie private sentiments, pluralistic ignorance occurs, and when they map closely onto private sentiments, it does not occur. However, because the two phenomena stem from the same self-presentation processes, research on pluralistic ignorance provides valuable data on homegrown stereotypes. Specifically, it offers numerous examples of these stereotypes and also illustrates the properties of in-group self-presentation. We now turn our attention to those properties.

In-Group Self-Presentation

Homegrown stereotypes originate in self-presentations directed to the in-group: Group members often present themselves to each other in ways designed to secure approbation or avoid disapprobation (Gordon, 1952; McKeachie, 1954; Rommetveit, 1955). Although examples of such behaviors are common in real-world settings, they have rarely been the subject of formal investigations (Leary, 1996). The reason for the dearth of research on in-group self-presentation is likely traceable to Goffman's (1959, 1961) influential dramaturgical model, with its division of behavioral contexts into *onstage* and *backstage venues*. With this division, Goffman implied that self-presentation (acting) occurs, or at least most prominently occurs, only when people are presenting themselves to out-group members (i.e., those in other roles). When backstage, actors presumably abandon their roles and behave authentically. To quote Goffman (1959), the individual when backstage "can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character" (p. 112).

It is certainly true that group members often present themselves differently to out-group members than to in-group members and that the selves that group members

present to their peers are often more authentic than those they present to members of out-groups. But this is not invariably the case. Sometimes individuals present the same inauthentic self to the in-group and the out-group (see, e.g., Hill, Stycos, & Back, 1957; Matza, 1964). Moreover, even when individuals do present different selves to their in-groups and out-groups, the former are often no more authentic than the latter. For example, the teachers' staff room is as much a stage for self-presentation as is the classroom, though the image that the teachers endeavor to project may be radically different in the two venues. To the extent that group members are motivated to present themselves in certain ways to their peers, the potential for homegrown stereotypes exists.

What Is Presented

The contents of those stereotypes depend on precisely what qualities individuals endeavor to present to their peers. Chief among these is likely to be some degree of out-group antagonism (Reicher et al., 1998). For example, homegrown stereotypes of out-group hostility are common when interdependent groups hold antagonistic roles. The relations between prison guards and inmates are a well-studied case in point (Akers, 1977). Numerous studies have demonstrated that both prison guards and inmates see their in-groups as tough and hostile toward the other group and that these views are characterized by pluralistic ignorance. For example, Toch and Klofas (1984) found that a sizable majority of prison guards believed that their fellow guards would agree with the position that "the best way to deal with inmates is to be firm" (p. 143) but that, in fact, only a minority actually agreed with this statement themselves (see also Kauffman, 1981). Wheeler (1961) found that both prison guards and inmates overestimated the harshness of their in-group's attitudes, each assuming that their group was less sympathetic toward the out-group than they themselves were. Reviewing a large number of studies of prison life, Toch and Klofas concluded that the stereotypes of the in-groups commonly reported in these studies reflect the fact that prisoners' and guards' onstage behavior is much less sympathetic to the other group than their private views would dictate.

¹ At first blush, the tendency for people to underestimate their similarity to others in cases of pluralistic ignorance seems to stand in direct contradiction to the well-documented tendency for people to overestimate their similarity to others (Marks & Miller, 1987; Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). However, the two phenomena appear to be largely independent. Pluralistic ignorance is driven by a tendency to take other people's behavior at face value and is manifested in a mean difference in ratings of self and others. False consensus is driven by a tendency to anchor on one's own views when judging others and is manifested in a positive correlation between ratings of self and others. People can and often do show both of these tendencies simultaneously. Indeed, the results of many studies of pluralistic ignorance show both an overestimation of support for the public norm and a systematic relation between respondents' ratings of self and others (see, e.g., Fields & Schuman, 1976; Prentice & Miller, 1993). These results suggest that, when estimating other people's internal states, perceivers take into account both their own internal states and the public behaviors of the target individual or group (see Miller & Prentice, 1996, for a discussion).

The social dynamic found in prison life may well be a common one in institutional life. For example, Packard and Willower (1972) documented a similar dynamic in their investigation of relations between students and teachers in a high school setting. These researchers were particularly interested in teacher support for a "custodial pupil control ideology" (Packard & Willower, 1972, p. 79), an emphasis on the maintenance of order, distrust of pupils, and a moralistic approach to pupil control. Packard and Willower found that most teachers believed this ideology was supported by the majority of other teachers, even though private survey responses revealed little support for it. The investigators attributed this homegrown stereotype and pluralistic ignorance to the presence of strong antistudent norms in the teacher culture, which shaped the views that teachers were willing to express to each other.

Homegrown stereotypes of out-group antagonism can arise even when the adversarial relationship that exists between the social groups has no institutional basis. Such stereotypes were demonstrated by Katz and Allport (1928) in one of the earliest investigations of social attitudes. These researchers asked Syracuse University fraternity members about their attitudes toward many issues, including the acceptability of broadening the membership of their fraternity. Their responses indicated that they believed their fraternity brothers were opposed to allowing members of other groups into their fraternity, even though they themselves had no personal objections to broadening membership. In other words, they held a homegrown stereotype of the in-group as socially exclusive. This homegrown stereotype is quite common (Breed & Ktsanes, 1961; Fields & Schuman, 1976; O'Gorman, 1975; O'Gorman & Garry, 1976).

The facade of out-group antagonism takes on a very interesting form when the relationship between in-group and out-group is supposed to be one of mutual commitment and devotion. As an illustration, consider the celebrated case of an actor whose backstage remarks (directed to the in-group) were inadvertently transmitted to the out-group. This case (a staple of TV blooper shows) involved the host of a children's TV show who, mistakenly thinking he was off the air, declared to his adoring audience, "I guess that'll hold the little bastards for the night" (*Pardon My Blooper*, 1972, as cited in Leary, 1996, p. 90). This amusing incident nicely captures Goffman's (1959) distinction between on-stage and backstage group life.

The host's backstage words implied that his apparent enjoyment of children was inauthentic (i.e., role prescribed) and that his true feelings were much less prochildren. Further, this sentiment would seem to have been shared by the show's production staff and crew, for the host was unlikely to have made his utterance if he believed that it would incur the disapprobation of the in-group. But as sensible as such reasoning seems, it may be incorrect. What justification is there for viewing the crew as any less of an audience, and therefore any less of a target for self-presentation, than the TV audience? And what justification is there for viewing the host's expression of cynicism to his in-group as any less norm driven (and hence as any less

likely to deviate from his true feelings) than his expression of devotion to the out-group? There would seem to be little justification in either case. Moreover, to the extent that the host's remarks to the in-group belied his private sentiments, we might expect him, along with the other members of the crew, to believe that everyone but them endorsed the cynicism that pervaded the show's backstage environment.

Whenever role requirements induce role occupants to present themselves publicly as being enthusiastically committed to the values and well-being of those in another role, there is a tendency for the role occupants to adopt a more cynical backstage posture. Further, the actors' backstage facade of cynicism can affect their perceptions of each other as much as their onstage facade of devotion affects their audience's perceptions of them.

The wish to be seen as having an appropriately disparaging view of the out-group is not the only source of the self-presentations that produce homegrown stereotypes (Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995; Reicher et al., 1995). Another source is the wish to be seen as loyal to the in-group—as someone who does not publicly undermine in-group activities or values, however little one might privately support them (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughan, 1994; Fiske & Von Hendy, 1992; Tetlock, Skitka, & Boettger, 1989). Consider once again Fields and Schuman's (1976) study of attitudes toward racial integration. One reason the White homemakers in this study presented themselves to their peers as conservative on the question of racial integration may have been a desire to express appropriately anti-out-group sentiments. However, it also seems likely that the public lip service they paid to the stereotyped in-group position was motivated simply by their wish not to be seen as a troublemaker or a bad neighbor.

Of course, as much as people care about being seen as good group members, they also care about being seen as good individuals. Self-presentations directed toward the latter goal can also give rise to homegrown stereotypes. Nurses, for example, present a public facade of professionalism (i.e., competence, calmness, objectivity, and stability) that belies their private feelings of anxiety and stress. Maslach (1982) found that these public presentations are driven not only by a wish to be seen as professional but also by a wish not to be seen as "sore thumbs," "weak links," or "sob sisters" (p. 11). That is, people seek to avoid being stigmatized with a label that is negative regardless of the group context in which it is applied. The behaviors that cause one to be labeled a *wimp* or a *rate buster* may vary in the prison staff room, the gang headquarters, the shop floor, the college dormitory, and the corporate boardroom, but the stigma attached to these labels is constant, as is the motivation to avoid their application to the self.

Who Presents Themselves

We have emphasized the importance of how people present themselves to their peers in shaping the contents of homegrown stereotypes. Equally important is who presents themselves. Some members of groups are more active, vocal, and public in their self-presentations than others.

The most prominent and noticeable members of a group are likely to have a disproportionate influence on the group's homegrown stereotypes (Noelle-Neumann, 1986).

Who are these people likely to be? A number of studies have indicated that the people most likely to express their beliefs publicly to the in-group are those holding beliefs that conform most closely to prototypical group norms and values. For example, consider Korte's (1972) finding that students at Vassar College, an institution with a liberal ethos and social identity (at least at the time of the study), perceived themselves to be less liberal than the majority of their peers on a number of social and political issues. For example, students estimated that a majority of their peers would agree with the statement "Religious beliefs are essentially self-deluding and false" (Korte, 1972, p. 580), but only a minority of students actually did agree with it. Korte attributed the emergence of a homegrown stereotype that exaggerated the liberalness of Vassar students to the presence of a vocal and conspicuous minority consisting of the most liberal students and faculty on campus.

A similar dynamic may have played a role in several of the cases of homegrown stereotypes that we have already described. For example, Wheeler (1961) attributed prison inmates' stereotype of their group as antiadministration to the prominence of a vocal antiadministration minority. As she put it,

much of the strength of the inmate culture may reside in the ability of anti-staff oriented inmates to attain positions of high visibility within the inmate system, thereby generating and reinforcing the image of a culture marked in conflict with the values of the administration. (Wheeler, 1961, p. 291)

In addition, Packard and Willower (1972) acknowledged that the homegrown stereotype they observed among schoolteachers may have been triggered by witnessing norm-supporting behavior in places of high visibility within the school.

In short, homegrown stereotypes reflect not just how group members present themselves but also which group members present themselves. People who best exemplify the values of the social identity, by being the most salient, can convey the impression that the prototypical group values are widely shared. This process of unrepresentative belief expression is in no way incompatible with the process of strategic belief expression that we have already identified. Indeed, the two processes may often operate in tandem. Moreover, even when a homegrown stereotype arises through unrepresentative belief expression, it may grow stronger through strategic belief expression induced by conformity pressures.

Consequences for Group Members

The in-group self-presentation processes that we have outlined have important implications for the consequences of homegrown stereotypes. In particular, they suggest that these stereotypes are likely to have considerable personal significance for group members. Because they are inferred from strategic behavior directed to the in-group, home-

grown stereotypes reflect the images that group members are trying to present to each other—images of what a good person or good group member is supposed to be like. This may involve showing grace under pressure (Maslach, 1982), supporting the in-group and distancing from out-groups (Fields & Schuman, 1976; Katz & Allport, 1928; Klofas & Toch, 1982; Packard & Willower, 1972), being self-confident and comfortable with risk taking (Prentice & Miller, 1993), or being moral and upstanding members of the community (Schanck, 1932). In all of these cases, group members are highly invested in the images they are presenting and are cognizant of how they measure up to their peers in these domains. More than other stereotypes of the in-group, homegrown stereotypes serve as important standards for self-evaluation.

As a consequence, when these stereotypes do not map onto how group members see themselves, they have the propensity to leave virtually everybody feeling deviant and alienated. Maslach (1982) found evidence of such a dynamic in her investigation of burnout among professional nurses. Her interviews revealed that much of the stress and many of the negative feelings experienced by nurses were due to their belief that they, unlike the majority of their peers, fell short of an appropriate standard of professionalism. Yes, they acted competent, calm, objective, and stable, pretending they were not rattled, overwhelmed, or insecure; however, their peers actually were competent, calm, objective, and stable, or so they thought. As one of the nurses in Maslach's study put it, "everyone else seemed to be handling things OK, which made me feel even worse—like a failure and a weakling who wasn't cut out for this kind of work" (Maslach, 1982, p. 11).

Sometimes it is not self-evaluations but attachments to the in-group that suffer. We (Prentice & Miller, 1993) found that Princeton students felt less connected to the university to the extent that they saw their feelings about alcohol as discrepant from the stereotype they held of their peers. A similar dynamic may characterize other communities in which homegrown stereotypes develop. Residents of the Methodist community studied by Schanck (1932), for example, may have felt less attached to their community as a consequence of their belief that they supported their church's teachings less strongly than did other residents. Similarly, the Vassar students studied by Korte (1972) may have been less attached to their college than they would have been had they held an accurate assessment of their peers' sociopolitical attitudes.

However, when homegrown stereotypes do map onto how group members see themselves, they can be a potent source of comfort and direction. Such was the case, we suspect, for Americans who wanted to show group solidarity and in-group pride in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. The emergence of flag flying as a symbol of patriotism gave Americans a behavioral language with which to express their positive in-group sentiments and to recognize those expressions in others. By enacting this behavior, they could achieve a desired self-image and receive positive feedback to this effect from their neighbors and coworkers. Moreover, the homegrown stereotype that

emerged from this behavior was one with which group members could identify: It suggested that their group was strong and that their feelings were shared. For all of the discomfort and alienation that homegrown stereotypes can engender, it is also important to recognize how rewarding they can be.

Concluding Remarks

In closing, we return to the question of the accuracy of homegrown stereotypes. As the literature on pluralistic ignorance reveals, homegrown stereotypes often do not provide an accurate reflection of individual group members' private qualities and sentiments. Moreover, correspondence between stereotypical qualities and members' private qualities can emerge as group members internalize their self-presentations (see, e.g., Prentice & Miller, 1993), or this correspondence can dissipate as members undergo private change that is not publicly acknowledged (see, e.g., Fields & Schuman, 1976). Thus, if we use the aggregate of individual group members' self-ratings as our criterion for assessing accuracy (as numerous researchers have done; see, e.g., Judd & Park, 1993; Judd et al. 1991; Madon et al. 1998), homegrown stereotypes receive mixed reviews.

However, it is not at all clear that the aggregate of private self-ratings provides the appropriate criterion for assessing the accuracy of these stereotypes. Even in cases of pluralistic ignorance, homegrown stereotypes are an accurate reflection of something about individual group members—just not their internal states. When college students present themselves as comfortable with drinking, this behavior says something about them—that they want to be, or feel they ought to be, comfortable with drinking. Thus, the behavior is an authentic expression of self, even though it does not map onto their private views. Similarly, when nurses present themselves as calm, cool, and collected, it is an authentic expression of their desire to have these qualities. Indeed, all of the cases of pluralistic ignorance we have described involved group members acting in ways that provided authentic expressions of their public or social selves. The in-group stereotypes that arose from these behaviors were not accurate reflections of group members' private views, but this inaccuracy stemmed from a discrepancy between what individuals were trying to be publicly and what they thought they were privately.

Therefore, perhaps a better criterion for assessing the accuracy of homegrown stereotypes is the extent to which these stereotypes reflect the impression that group members are trying to create. By this criterion, we believe that homegrown stereotypes are highly accurate. If there is one general conclusion we can draw from the literature on pluralistic ignorance, it is that people are very skilled self-presenters—much more skilled than they think they are (Gilovich, Savitsky, & Medvec, 1998; Vorauer & Miller, 1997). Under most conditions, the impression they give is very closely calibrated to the impression they endeavor to give. Thus, homegrown stereotypes provide an accurate reflection of group members' public selves. The discrepancy that often arises between these stereotypes and private self-ratings reflects the fact that people are better at

convincing their peers with their self-presentations than they are at convincing themselves.

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