

Responding to Tokenism: individual action in the face of collective injustice

STEPHEN C. WRIGHT^{1*}
and DONALD M. TAYLOR²

¹*Psychology Department,
University of California, Santa Cruz, U.S.A.*

²*Psychology Department, McGill University,
Canada.*

Abstract

Tokenism is defined as an intergroup context in which very few members of a disadvantaged group are accepted into positions usually reserved for members of the advantaged group, while access is systematically denied for the vast majority of disqualified disadvantaged group members. In a laboratory experiment, Wright, Taylor and Moghaddam (1990) found that when disadvantaged group members are denied upward mobility because of a policy of tokenism they did not respond with socially disruptive forms of collective action. Instead, they chose a more benign individual non-normative response. The robustness of this unexpected response to tokenism is explored in two experiments. In Experiment 1, the use of a relevant real-world ingroup as the target of tokenism resulted in a pattern of responses consistent with Wright et al.'s (1990) findings. In Experiment 2, interaction with other disadvantaged group members prior to the imposition of the policy of tokenism also did not alter participants' behavioural responses. These findings support the robustness of this pattern of response to tokenism, and strengthen concerns that tokenism may be an effective tool for reducing the likelihood of collective action directed against the discriminatory practices of the advantaged group. © 1998 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

*Correspondence to: Stephen C. Wright, Psychology Department, Social Sciences II, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064, U.S.A.

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INTRODUCTION

'Tokenism' describes an intergroup context in which very few members of a disadvantaged group are accepted into positions usually reserved for members of the advantaged group, while access is systematically denied for the vast majority of qualified disadvantaged group members. In a laboratory experiment designed to explore the responses of disadvantaged group members who were denied upward mobility, Wright, Taylor and Moghaddam (1990) discovered that the imposition of an explicit policy of tokenism by the advantaged group led to a pattern of responses that was both unexpected and disconcerting.

The responses were unexpected in the sense that although the strict restrictions of tokenism made upward mobility virtually impossible, group members who were victimized by this policy responded very differently than did those facing absolutely no opportunity for upward mobility. That is, while those who faced complete rejection of their group (i.e. no chance of upward mobility) engaged in socially disruptive collective actions, those confronted with 'tokenism' preferred more benign forms of individual behaviour and showed little interest in collective action. The implications of this pattern of responses are disquieting in the sense that 'tokenism' would appear to be an effective means by which advantaged groups can engage in discriminatory practices with little chance of provoking group-level confrontation.

However, there are a number of reasons why it may be premature to conclude that 'tokenism' will not give rise to collective action. The initial finding was one of a number of results reported in Wright *et al.*'s (1990) research. In fact, tokenism was not the primary focus of the experiment, and, to date, the findings have not been fully replicated. In addition, a number of the procedures used in the original experiment raise questions about the generality of the findings. The present experiments were designed to test the stability and robustness of the pattern of response to tokenism, while extending and strengthening the research paradigm.

A Paradigm for the Study of Tokenism

To address the question of how disadvantaged group members respond to tokenism or any form of treatment by an advantaged group, one must first consider the forms of behaviour available to them. The variety of behaviours that a member of a disadvantaged group might exhibit is extensive. At one end of the spectrum, disadvantaged group members might take no action. At the other, they may attempt to instigate violent collective protest. Between these two behavioural extremes are a multitude of possible responses. Any programmatic investigation of disadvantaged group behaviour must begin by defining a conceptual framework for categorizing these numerous specific behaviours.

Building on previous frameworks (Crosby, 1976; Dion, 1986; Mark & Folger, 1984; Martin, 1986), Wright and his colleagues (Wright *et al.*, 1990) proposed a framework that divides the actions of disadvantaged-group members into five discrete categories based on one of three broad distinctions. First, a distinction is made between inaction and action. The second distinction is between actions directed at improving one's personal conditions (individual action) and actions directed at improving the

conditions of one's entire group (collective action). The third distinction is between actions which conform to the norms of the existing social system (normative action) and those that are outside the confines of the existing social rules and structure (nonnormative action). The result is five discrete categories of behaviour. *Inaction*, the lack of overt behaviour directed at altering the *status quo*, may reflect passive acceptance or angry resignation. *Individual normative action* includes any socially accepted behaviour directed at improving one's personal status, such as pursuing an education, getting a second job, or asking for a raise. *Individual nonnormative actions* would include attempts at individual mobility known to be in violation of societal rules, such as criminal activity, cheating on one's taxes or on an entrance exam, or sabotaging the success of a rival. *Collective normative actions* are socially sanctioned actions intended to enhance ingroup status, such as political lobbying, voting, or collective bargaining. Finally, *collective nonnormative actions* are designed to improve the status of one's ingroup while violating the understood societal rules, such as illegal protests, civil disobedience, or terrorism.

The focus on actual behaviour distinguishes this framework from its predecessors. In addition, it is expressly psychological, in that the categories are determined by the actor's intentions not the number of participants, or the specific content or eventual outcome of the action. A group member engages in collective action anytime he or she is acting as a representative of the group and the action is directed at improving the condition of the entire group. Thus, collective action can be engaged in by a single individual as long as he or she is acting on behalf of an ingroup. Similarly, if the actor is aware that his or her behaviour is inconsistent with the expectations of the broader social system, the action is nonnormative. Notice, however, the distinction does not involve the actors' perception of the appropriateness, legitimacy, or morality of their actions. She or he simply needs to be aware that the action, no matter how justified, violates some societal expectation or convention. Finally, this simple framework represents a broad array of potential acts, while distinguishing theoretically and socially important dimensions of disadvantaged-group behaviour.

To date, most research and theory has focused on two intergroup contexts. The first is represented by the meritocratic ideal, where access to an advantaged position is entirely determined by the performance of the individual. The second is one of complete discrimination, where one's social position is entirely dependent upon ascribed group memberships (e.g. race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language). Here access to an advantaged position is entirely closed to members of the disadvantaged group.

These two conditions represent divergent and interesting intergroup contexts, and they appear to lead to very different patterns of disadvantaged group responding. Consistent with predictions based on relative deprivation theory (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Hogg & Abrams, 1988), and the five-stage model of intergroup relations (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984), researchers (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Wright *et al.*, 1990) have found that disadvantaged-group members in an open context respond with inaction or individual normative strategies, while those confronted with an advantaged group that is completely closed respond with collective nonnormative behaviour.

Wright *et al.* (1990) in their laboratory investigation of disadvantaged group behaviour introduced a condition in which participants faced a very restrictive quota

such that the vast majority of capable members of their group (98 per cent), including the participants themselves, were denied access to the advantaged group. In this 'tokenism' condition, disadvantaged group members responded with a clear preference for individual nonnormative action—a pattern of behaviour unlike that found in either a completely open or entirely closed condition.

The preference for individual nonnormative action is both surprising and disconcerting. It is surprising because none of the major theories of intergroup relations would predict this particular form of behaviour. Both social identity theorists (e.g. Hogg & Abrams, 1988) and Taylor and McKirnan (1984), in their five-stage model, discuss situations where the objective permeability of group boundaries is highly restricted. However, both discussions focus on the advantaged group's efforts to deny the reality of the restricted boundaries and to perpetuate the belief that group membership is based on individual merit—to maintain the 'myth' of individual mobility. The five-stage model posits that the few successful tokens will be used 'as evidence that the system works, that it is just, and that anyone with the required abilities can "make it"' (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, p.146). The implication in both theories is that if the disadvantaged group was to find out the truth about the restricted permeability (if the myth of meritocracy was exploded), collective action would result. However, in Wright *et al.*'s (1990) experiment disadvantaged group members are openly and directly told of the highly restricted boundaries—no 'myth' of openness is perpetuated. Yet, they still prefer individual action.

In addition, the preference for nonnormative action is also inconsistent with the five-stage model's prediction that success of a few tokens will create the perception within the disadvantaged group that the intergroup situation is open and just (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984). Nonnormative actions are much more indicative of feelings of injustice and illegitimacy. In fact, Wright and Taylor (1992) have now shown that tokenism is recognised as unjust even by the few disadvantaged group members who do succeed under tokenism—the successful tokens.

The preferences for individual nonnormative action is also unexpected because the impact of tokenism and a completely closed context are very similar in terms of both personal and collective outcomes. At the personal level, these two contexts result in identical experiences; despite demonstrating adequate ability, the individual is robbed of a substantial personal gain because of his or her group membership. At the group level, both situations are clearly discriminatory; many capable members of the ingroup are being denied access to an advantaged position. Yet, the victims of tokenism respond with individual action rather than the collective behaviour preferred by those facing a completely closed intergroup context.

From the perspective of the disadvantaged group, the choice of individual action raises concerns. Collective nonnormative action is the most disruptive response and is the form of action most likely to alter the intergroup context. Even if successful, individual action results only in improvements to the individual's personal position and is unlikely to affect intergroup inequalities (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In addition, selecting nonnormative action is particularly worrisome. Most social systems have structures in place to catch and punish individuals who violate established norms. Therefore, those engaging in individual nonnormative behaviour are likely to face sanctions at the hands of the advantaged group.

Laboratory research designed to investigate disadvantaged-group members' preference for an array of actions including collective action has been scarce (see Grant &

Brown, 1995; Wright *et al.*, 1990), and most relevant social psychological research has adopted a decidedly individualistic stance. In most experimental studies, the context is operationalized such that the individual responds to a set of situations created by the experimenter or by the laboratory setting. Wright *et al.*'s (1990) research paradigm differs in two ways. First, it attempts to embed the individual in an *intergroup* context such that the individual's understanding of the intergroup situation is shaped by the actions and activities of an advantaged outgroup. That is, the position of the disadvantaged group, and the individual's continued membership in it, appear to result from discriminatory practices by an advantaged group. Thus, disadvantaged-group members respond to the policies and practices of an advantaged outgroup rather than the actions of the experimenter or the structure of the experimental situation, and their responses are directed at the outgroup. The result is a decidedly intergroup context.

Second, in this paradigm the actions of the advantaged group are interpreted and responded to by the disadvantaged-group members within an established social reality. The research paradigm attempts to incorporate aspects of the political and ideological context relevant to most intergroup contexts. One extremely pervasive aspect of the North American, and to a lesser degree Western European, reality is the meritocratic ideology with its emphasis on individual mobility. Tajfel (1975, 1982) in his early discussions of SIT describe this ideology as an important backdrop to understanding the behaviour of disadvantaged-group members. This paradigm attempts to represent this ideological backdrop. Thus, in the present research, we utilized modified versions of the Wright *et al.* (1990) paradigm to test the robustness and generality of the basic tokenism finding—that disadvantaged-group members faced with a policy of tokenism will prefer individual nonnormative actions.

EXPERIMENT 1

There is evidence in a number of domains of intergroup relations research to show that participants often respond differently to 'real' group categorizations than to 'artificial', laboratory-created categories. In a meta-analysis of the ingroup bias effect, Mullen, Brown and Smith (1992) found that real group categorizations produced greater intergroup bias than artificial groups. Mullen and his colleagues (e.g. Mullen & Hu, 1989, Mullen, Salas, & Driskell, 1989) have also found stronger effects of real group categories in several other domains of intergroup and intragroup behaviour.

Walker and Pettigrew (1984), point out the importance of commitment to the ingroup as a prerequisite of the feelings of fraternal deprivation that are necessary to produce collective action. They refer specifically to temporary or emotionally neutral groups as unlikely to inspire the commitment necessary to produce real feelings of fraternal deprivation. The laboratory-created groups used by Wright *et al.* (1990) clearly qualify as temporary and emotionally neutral groups. Real-world categories may increase the salience of ingroup membership (Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Mullen *et al.* 1992) or they may attract greater ingroup identification from participants (Kelly, 1988, 1993), or they may increase the realism, and thus participants' involvement in the research paradigm. All of these explanations would support the hypothesis that real categorization could result in greater interest in actions directed at

benefiting the ingroup as a whole—collective actions. Thus, an obvious first extension of Wright *et al.*'s (1990) finding would be to utilize a more relevant real-world ingroup to serve as the explicit target of discrimination in the tokenism and closed conditions.¹

The use of real social categories should result in little change in the previously demonstrated patterns of behaviour in an open (meritocratic) or closed (complete discrimination) context. In an open social structure group membership does not affect one's status, and therefore should not be a determinant of behaviour. Thus, when the advantaged group is apparently open to all those who are capable, participants should select inaction or individual normative behaviour. In the completely closed condition, even the artificial laboratory-created ingroup was able to generate a preference for collective behaviour. Using real categories should only enhance this preference. However, the use of a real world ingroup may affect disadvantaged-group behaviour in the tokenism condition. The increased salience of and/or identification with the ingroup, and/or the increased realism of the experience all should lead to greater interest in collective action. Thus, we hypothesize that *when tokenism is imposed on a real-world ingroup, participants will show little interest in individual nonnormative action (the response previously found to be preferred by participants in the tokenism condition) and strong endorsement of collective action.*

Method

Design

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three 'group openness' conditions. Feedback to the participants was manipulated such that they believed that the advantaged group was either open to all qualified individuals (meritocratic), completely closed to all members of their group (complete discrimination), or highly restricted to members of their group (tokenism). The primary dependent measures included: ratings of endorsement of each of five behavioural responses and the selection of a single behaviour to engage in.

Participants

The participants were 57 undergraduates recruited in undergraduate classes in the faculties of management, science, and physical therapy at a large Canadian university.

¹When selecting a relevant ingroup for use in the laboratory, the history of intergroup relations between these real-world groups must be considered. If one uses a group that has a history of disadvantage and/or discrimination (e.g. gender, race or religion), behaviour in the laboratory is more likely to reflect responses defined by previous social experiences, rather than laboratory manipulations. It is, therefore, necessary to utilize real-world ingroups whose histories are marked by neither clearly defined disadvantaged status, nor experiences with intergroup discrimination.

All participants in the present experiment were university students and each belonged to a specific and well-defined faculty of study. Thus, faculty affiliation provided an ingroup to which participants would feel considerable identification, while at the same time this is an ingroup that is unlikely to have been the target of past discrimination. In addition, past research has used faculty affiliation as an effective real-world ingroup (Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Turner & Brown, 1978).

Participants volunteered for the opportunity to 'participate in interesting decision-making tasks' and to win \$200 in a lottery. All participants indicated that they had never previously participated in a social psychology experiment.

Procedure and Materials

Each experimental trial included 5 to 10 participants all from one of three faculties of study. Although participants entered the laboratory at the same time and were aware of each other, they worked at individual desks separated by dividers and were instructed to work independently and not to interact with one another.

Instructions to Participants Initial instructions were provided orally by the experimenter and were reinforced and supplemented by a 3-minute tape-recorded message. Participants were told that the experiment was being administered in a number of departments on campus. It was explained that the experiment was intended to test their ability to make effective decisions about people, a skill which was characterized as essential to success and attainment of positions of responsibility and leadership. They were told that previous research had found large individual differences in this skill. To take advantage of these differences, participants would be split into two groups based on their decision-making ability. They were led to believe that their performance on an initial decision-making test would determine if they would complete the experiment as a member of the high-ability or low-ability group.

To further stimulate participants' interest in advancement and to make it apparent that the low-ability group was clearly disadvantaged, the benefits of membership in the high-ability group were clearly delineated. Participants were told that if accepted into the high-ability group, they would associate with high-status others who had already been recognised as superior decision makers. Acceptance also resulted in greater rewards and responsibilities. Ostensibly, the high-ability group received more exciting and challenging tasks. Also, after the experiment, high-ability group members participated in a \$200 lottery, whereas the low-ability group members would participate only in a \$20 lottery. Most importantly, it was explained that the members of the high-ability group evaluated the performance of low-ability group members, and ultimately determined who would be allowed into their high-status group. It was explained that a panel of three high-ability group members who had demonstrated superior skills in a previous session had returned today and were now working in the next room. This panel would act as judges in the evaluation of the new participants' work and would decide who would join them in the high-ability group. In reality, there was no high-ability group and the feedback received by each participant was determined by the experimental manipulation.

Experimental Procedures Following the tape-recorded instructions, participants were given 15 minutes to read the evidence from a criminal case and to answer two short essay-style questions. This constituted the initial decision-making test, ostensibly designed to determine their position as a high-ability or low-ability decision maker. Their answers were collected and passed to an assistant, who was to take them to the panel of high-ability group judges. A 12-minute delay then followed,

during which time the three judges were supposedly grading the participants' work. During this delay period, the experimenter distributed a blank sample mark sheet and described in detail the procedure used by the judges to arrive at their mark. It was explained that the high-ability group had set a mark of 8.5/10 as the score required for acceptance into their group. In order to fill the remaining waiting time, the experimenter gave the participants a second case with which to familiarize themselves. This case was described as one of the group tasks used in the second part of the experiment. In reality, this second case served only to reinforce the notion that participants would be participating in a second part of the experiment as a member of either the high-ability or low-ability group.

Following the prescribed delay, the completed mark sheets were returned by the assistant and distributed. On all mark sheets the final decision stated that the participant was to remain in the low-ability group. Information provided on these mark sheets put into effect the manipulation of group openness. Because each experimental trial included 5 to 10 participants and the experimental manipulations were in the form of written feedback, it was possible to randomly assign participants in each session to one of the three group openness conditions. The experimenter remained blind to each participant's experimental condition, as this was determined randomly by the assistant who returned the mark sheets.

Group Openness Manipulation Advantaged-group openness was manipulated by altering the judges' written comments on the mark sheet. In the open (meritocratic) condition, rejection was based solely on the participant's failure to reach the required mark. They received a mark of 8.2 (below the required 8.5), and the judges' comments indicated that all those who had achieved the required score were accepted into the high-ability group.

In the tokenism and closed conditions, participants received a score of 8.8 (above the established 8.5 criterion) but were rejected because discriminatory restrictions had now been placed on people from their faculty of study. In the closed (complete discrimination) condition, participants were told that the high-ability group had decided not to accept any members from their faculty, regardless of their performance on the decision-making test. For example, a management student would be told that although he or she had met the usual requirements, the high-ability group had decided to exclude all management students and were not accepting any members from the faculty of management. Therefore, he or she was rejected and would have to remain in the low-ability group.

In the tokenism condition, participants were told that the high-ability group had decided to impose a strict quota on members of their faculty. They were now admitting only 2 per cent of those who had achieved 8.5 or better. For example, a science student was told that although he or she had met the usual requirements, the high-ability group had decided to severely restrict the number of science students in their group. Now, only 2 per cent of the science students who had scored better than 8.5 would be accepted. Thus, he or she was rejected and would have to remain in the low-ability group. No specific reasons were given to justify the restriction imposed in the closed and tokenism conditions. The manipulation was intended only to alter the apparent openness of the advantaged group. However, the judges' comments explicitly stated that the new restrictions were directed specifically at the participant's faculty as a group.

Behavioral Options Participants were given a few minutes to read their mark sheet and digest their negative feedback. The experimenter then approached the participants individually, and privately asked if they had succeeded or failed to gain entrance into the advantaged group. Those who failed (all participants) were given a response form. The instructions informed participants that before continuing the experiment as a member of their designated group, those who had been rejected would be given an opportunity to respond to the negative decision of the judges. They were then asked to rate how much they would like to endorse each of five alternative behaviours. Because participants believed they would actually undertake the action they selected, these measures are most accurately interpreted as behavioural commitments.

The response alternatives were presented in the form of five statements, each followed by an 11-point Likert-type scale, anchored by *not at all* (0) and *very much* (10). The five alternatives included: (a) taking no action and agreeing to remain a member of the low-ability group for the remainder of the experiment. (b) Requesting an individual retest. A request for a retest was presented as an option that had been acceptable to the high-ability group in the past. Participants endorsing this option were, therefore, indicating a desire to use individual normative action to gain entry into the advantaged group. (c) Making an individual protest against the decision of the judges. This option involved composing a written protest indicating that the participant refused to continue to participate in the experiment until they personally received more satisfactory treatment from the high-ability group. This was described as unacceptable to the high-ability group and inconsistent with the rules and needs of the experiment. Thus, by endorsing this behaviour a participant was willing to ignore explicitly stated norms in an attempt to gain personal access to the advantaged group. (d) Requesting a collective retest. This strategy involved a request that the high-ability group allow a retest for all unsuccessful members of the participant's group. It was indicated that this had been acceptable to the high-ability group on some past occasions. Thus, this response was collective and normative in nature. (e) Attempting to instigate collective protest. Here, the participant was to compose a petition that urged other members of his or her group to ignore the explicitly stated rule and to collectively refuse to continue to participate in the experiment until satisfied with their collective treatment. This action was described as unacceptable to the high-ability group and inconsistent with the rules and needs of the experiment. Thus, selecting this alternative called for action that was collective and that violated the existing rules and norms.²

These five behavioural responses were pretested using a sample ($N = 99$) from the same population as participants in Experiment 1. Pretest participants read a full account of the experiment. Using 11-point Likert-type scales, they answered five questions about each of the behavioural responses: three related to the normative/nonnormative distinction (e.g. 'Do you think this behaviour violates the rules of the experiment?'), and two concerning the individual/collective distinction (e.g. 'Is this action directed at improving the situation of the person's entire group?'). The results

²The nature of the nonnormative actions used here are more specific than those used by Wright *et al.* (1990). Instead of simply indicating that the participant is to write a protest, here the participant must specifically indicate that he or she will discontinue participation in the experiment. Given the rarity of this behaviour in our research and the clear disruption it would cause to the experiment, it is assumed that this action would be considerably more nonnormative than the simple protest used in previous research.

showed that participants interpreted the five actions in the intended manner. High scores indicate more nonnormative and more collective actions. Inaction was seen as normative ($M = 2.01$) and neither collective nor individual in its intent ($M = 4.91$). The individual nonnormative ($M = 7.66$) and collective nonnormative ($M = 8.49$) actions were described as inconsistent with the expectation of the advantaged group and as violating the rules of the experiment, while individual normative ($M = 2.56$) and collective normative ($M = 3.89$) actions were not. The collective normative ($M = 8.63$) and collective nonnormative ($M = 7.42$) actions were described as directed at changing the conditions of the group, while the individual normative ($M = 1.94$) and individual nonnormative ($M = 2.99$) actions were seen as directed at improving the individual's own situation.

Behavioural Choice After rating their endorsement of each of the five behaviours, each participant signed a form indicating the one behaviour he or she had selected to take (i.e. the one rated nearest to 10 on the Likert-type scale). Those who accepted their position in the low-ability group, of course, would do nothing. Participants selecting an individual retest were given a second test. Participants selecting a collective retest composed a petition urging others to request a collective retest. Those selecting either of the nonnormative options were required to write the appropriate protest—an individual protest directed to the judges, or a petition intended to get other ingroup members to join their collective action.³

All participants were thoroughly debriefed and informed that all participants were entered in the \$200 lottery.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

A MANOVA and five subsequent univariate ANOVAs comparing the ratings of science, management, and physical therapy students on the five behavioural responses yielded no significant effects of participants' faculty of study.

Behavioral Option Ratings

The mean ratings of endorsement of each of the five behaviours (acceptance, individual normative, individual nonnormative, collective normative, and collective

³Creating nonnormative behavioural alternatives in a laboratory context presents a significant challenge. Simply providing the alternative to the participant endows it with some level of legitimacy and perhaps normative status. In addition, in the present study, the apparent violation of the studies norms by the advantaged group in the tokenism and closed conditions (the imposition of a quota or closure of their group) may reduce the perceived 'nonnormativeness' of any action by members of the disadvantaged group. We have attempted to overcome these limitations by selecting an action (discontinuing participation) which is clearly unusual and by clearly indicating that the action is unacceptable to the advantaged group and inconsistent with the needs and rules of the study. Also, we have shown that pretest participants recognise these actions as nonnormative. However, the constraints of the laboratory paradigm may limit the external validity of these particular dependent variables. Some caution is required in interpreting these responses as entirely consistent with nonnormative actions that may occur in real-world intergroup contexts.

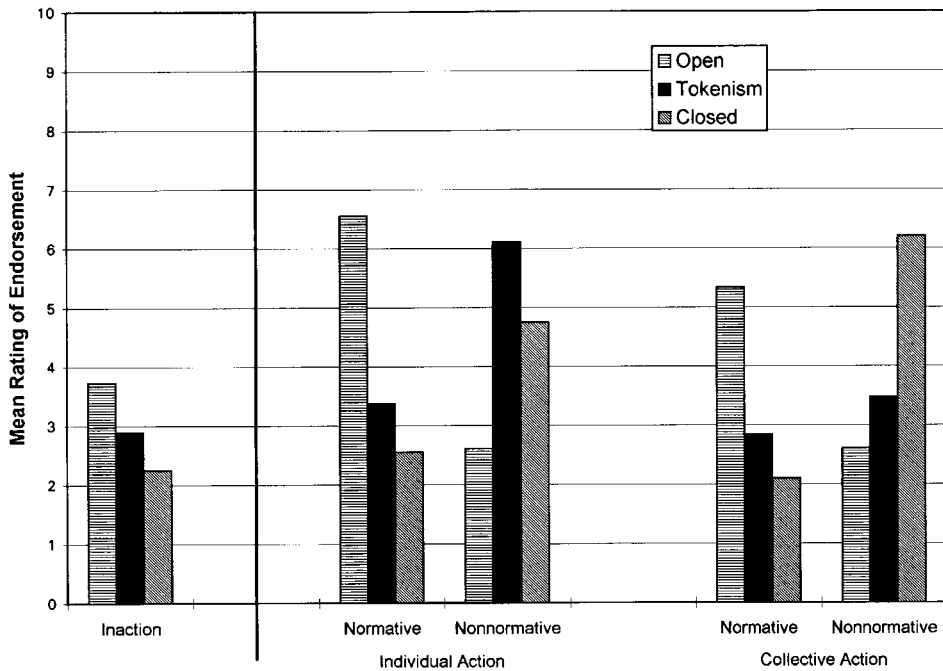


Figure 1. Experiment 1: mean rating of endorsement of each of five behavioural responses by participants in three group openness conditions

nonnormative) by participants in each of the three group openness conditions (open, tokenism, and closed) are presented in Figure 1. The most powerful means by which to analyse these data was to use two separate ANOVAs. The first was a one-way ANOVA comparing endorsement of inaction across the three conditions. The second was a $3 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed ANOVA examining differences between participants in the three group openness conditions (between-participants variable) on their ratings of support for individual versus collective actions and normative versus nonnormative actions (two repeated measures variables).

Inaction Participants in all three openness conditions showed little interest in inaction (see Figure 1). The one-way ANOVA yielded no significant effect of condition, $F(2,54) = 1.41$, n.s.

Individual Versus Collective and Normative Versus Nonnormative Action A $3 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed ANOVA comparing participants in the three group openness conditions on endorsement of individual versus collective and normative versus nonnormative actions yielded a significant condition by individual/collective interaction, $F(2,54) = 4.34$, $p < 0.05$, ($\eta^2 = 0.14$), a significant condition by normative/nonnormative interaction, $F(2,54) = 11.25$, $p < 0.001$, ($\eta^2 = 0.29$), and a significant three-way interaction, $F(2,54) = 5.48$, $p < 0.01$, ($\eta^2 = 0.17$).

In order to investigate this three-way interaction, separate 2×2 (individual/collective by normative/nonnormative) repeated measures ANOVAs were performed on the participants in each of the three group openness conditions. The first of these

2×2 ANOVAs, involving participants in the completely open condition, revealed a significant main effect of the individual/collective distinction, $F(1,17) = 5.93$, $p < 0.05$, ($\eta^2 = 0.26$), a significant main effect of the normative/nonnormative distinction, $F(1,17) = 20.36$, $p < 0.001$, ($\eta^2 = 0.55$), and a significant two-way interaction, $F(1,17) = 5.37$, $p < 0.05$, ($\eta^2 = 0.24$). Subsequent pairwise comparisons, using Newman–Keuls procedure ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicated that participants in the open condition gave significantly greater endorsement to the two normative actions than to the two nonnormative behaviours, significantly greater endorsement to individual normative action over collective normative action (see Figure 1).

The 2×2 ANOVA involving participants in the completely closed condition revealed a significant main effect of the normative/nonnormative distinction, $F(1,19) = 7.86$, $p < 0.05$, ($\eta^2 = 0.29$), indicating that in the closed conditions participants gave significantly greater endorsement to nonnormative over normative actions (see Figure 1). Both the main effect of the individual/collective distinction, $F(1,19) = 0.80$, n.s., and the interaction, $F(1,19) = 2.77$, n.s., failed to reach traditional levels of statistical significance.

The 2×2 ANOVA, involving participants in the tokenism condition, revealed a significant main effect of the individual/collective distinction, $F(1,18) = 6.84$, $p < 0.05$, ($\eta^2 = 0.28$) and a significant two-way interaction, $F(1,18) = 5.27$, $p < 0.05$, ($\eta^2 = 0.23$). Pairwise comparisons, using Newman–Keuls procedure ($\alpha = 0.05$), confirm that participants in the tokenism conditions gave significantly greater endorsement to individual nonnormative action than all three other actions (see Figure 1). The main effect of the normative/nonnormative distinction, $F(1,18) = 2.51$, n.s., failed to reach traditional levels of statistical significance.

Behavioral Choice

The single action actually carried out by each participant yielded the frequency data presented in Figure 2. These data were analysed in two separate analyses, each using an hierarchical log-linear modelling approach.

Inaction For this analysis the participants' selected responses were recorded to produce a dichotomous inaction/action variable (collapsing the four actions). Thus, the comparison is between the selection of inaction versus any of the four actions. The initial model (hypothesizing independence of group openness (O) and inaction/action (A)) included the main effect of group openness (O) and the main effects of inaction/action (A). The improvement in the model gained by including the group openness by inaction/action interaction (OA) only approached significance, $L^2(2) = 5.04$, $p = 0.08$. However, a visual inspection of Figure 2 shows that the inaction option was selected by over twice as many participants in the open condition than in the tokenism or the closed conditions.

Individual Versus Collective and Normative Versus Nonnormative Action The second analysis included only participants who took some form of action ($N = 45$) and examined the effect of group openness on preference for individual versus collective and normative versus nonnormative action. The initial model (hypothesizing independence of group openness and the two response distinctions) included

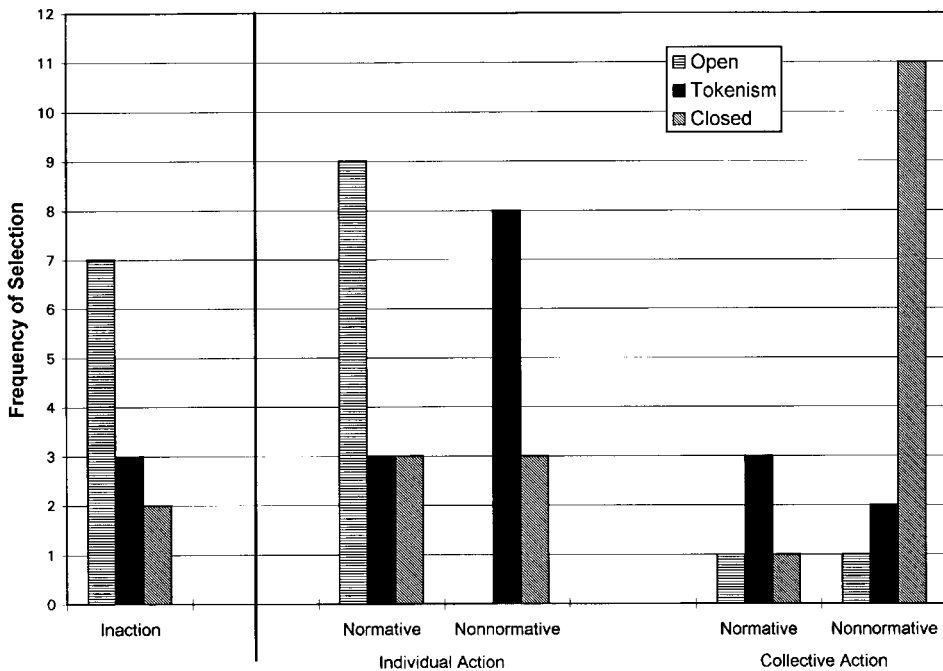


Figure 2. Experiment 1: frequency of selection of each of five behavioural responses by participants in three group openness conditions

the main effect of group openness (O), the main effects of individual/collective (I) and normative/nonnormative (N), as well as the individual/collective by normative/nonnormative interaction (IN). The inclusion of the group openness by individual/collective interaction, $L^2(2) = 8.07$, $p < 0.05$ (OI) significantly improved the fit of the model, as did the inclusion of the group openness by normative/nonnormative interaction (ON), $L^2(2) = 14.89$, $p < 0.001$, and the inclusion of the three-way interaction, $L^2(2) = 8.22$, $p < 0.05$. Thus, the optimal model is the saturated model (OIN). This optimal model describes a three-way dependence relationship between the group openness and a preference for normative versus nonnormative action and individual versus collective action. Figure 2 illustrates that this interaction is the result of the preference for individual normative action in the open condition, a preference for individual nonnormative action in the tokenism condition and a preference for collective nonnormative action in the closed condition.

Discussion

Responding to the Open and Closed Intergroup Boundaries

The pattern of responses found here was very similar to those reported by Wright *et al.* (1990). Those faced with failure in an open system preferred individual normative action. The relatively strong endorsement of collective normative action on the rating scales did not bear out in the single action actually engaged in. Also, consistent with

previous findings, participants in the completely closed condition showed a clear preference for collective nonnormative action, on both the rating scales and actual selected behaviour.

*Real-World Categories and the Preference for Individual Action
in Response to Tokenism*

The hypothesized impact of a real-world category on the actions of participants in the tokenism condition was not supported. A preference for individual nonnormative action under the highly restricted tokenism condition is again demonstrated. The relevant real-world ingroup (faculty of study) was no more effective in inciting collective action in the tokenism condition than was the artificial low-ability group categorization used by Wright and his colleagues (1990). These findings provide a clear replication of the original finding and strengthen claims concerning the robustness of the finding. They also increase concerns that tokenism may serve as a means of maintaining discriminatory barriers.

EXPERIMENT 2

Despite the use of a real-world ingroup in Experiment 1, it remains possible that, in the tokenism condition, the salience of the ingroup may remain low. The laboratory paradigm itself, by focusing on individual merit as the criterion for advancement, creates an individualistic context that may reduce the salience of the relevant ingroup. For example, participants are separated by dividers, they work independently, contact and interaction with other group members is strongly discouraged, and the task is highly individualistic. When this is combined, in the tokenism condition, with the subsequent success of a few *individuals*, attention to individual or personal identities may supersede attention to social identities (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

In Experiment 2, direct interaction with ingroup members prior to imposition of a policy of tokenism was used to reduce the individualistic nature of the laboratory setting. Interaction with group members is one determinant of intragroup attraction (Evans & Jarvis, 1980; Zander, 1979), and intragroup attraction is associated with intergroup behaviour. For example, Wilder and Thompson (1980) found that prior interaction with the ingroup increased subsequent ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination in resource allocation. Thus, this experiment tests the hypothesis *that face-to-face interaction among disadvantaged group members will increase their later endorsement of collective action in response to tokenism*.

Method

Participants

The participants were 60 undergraduates at a large Canadian university. Participants were volunteers recruited in a large psychology class with offers to 'participate in interesting decision-making tasks' and the chance to win \$200 in a lottery.

Procedures and Materials

Participants completed the experiment in groups of four to eight. The condition of each session was randomly determined using the flip of a coin. In both conditions, participants were told that the experiment was being administered in a number of departments across campus, but that this group had all been recruited in their psychology class.

The 'no group interaction' condition was a replication of the tokenism condition in Experiment 1. In this condition, participants were separated by dividers. All tasks were completed individually and participants were instructed to work independently.

In the 'group interaction' condition, groups of participants began the experiment by meeting at a large central table. They were given a name tag and were asked to introduce themselves to a group. As part of this introduction they were asked to indicate how they had found out about the experiment. In all cases, participants indicated that they had been recruited in their psychology class. After the standard taped and verbal instructions were given, the experimenter distributed the decision-making case (without the attached questions) and participants were given 5 minutes to discuss 'as a group' the contents of the case. Following this discussion, participants moved to individual desks separated by dividers. The test questions were then distributed and participants were instructed to work quietly and not to interact with others until they returned to the 'group table'. From this point on, the experiment was carried out exactly as in the original tokenism condition.

In both conditions, no interaction was allowed following the completion of the test question or after the return of the mark sheets. The policy of tokenism was directed at the group psychology students. Each participant received a mark sheet with the standard tokenism comments, indicating that he or she had received a mark above the required score, but he or she had not been accepted in the high-ability group because of the implementation of a restrictive 2 per cent quota on psychology students. The five behavioural response options were identical to those used in Experiment 1.

Results

Behavioral Option Ratings

The mean ratings of endorsement of each of the five behaviours (acceptance, individual normative, individual nonnormative, collective normative, and collective nonnormative) by participants in the interaction and no interaction conditions are presented in Figure 3. As in Experiment 1, the data were analysed in two separate ANOVAs: a one-way ANOVA comparing endorsement of inaction in the two conditions, and a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed ANOVA examining differences between participants in the two conditions (between-participants variable) on their ratings of support for individual versus collective actions and normative versus nonnormative actions (two repeated measures variables).

Inaction Participants in both conditions showed relatively little endorsement of inaction (see Figure 3) and the difference between the two conditions was not statistically significant, $F(1,57) = 1.36$, n.s.

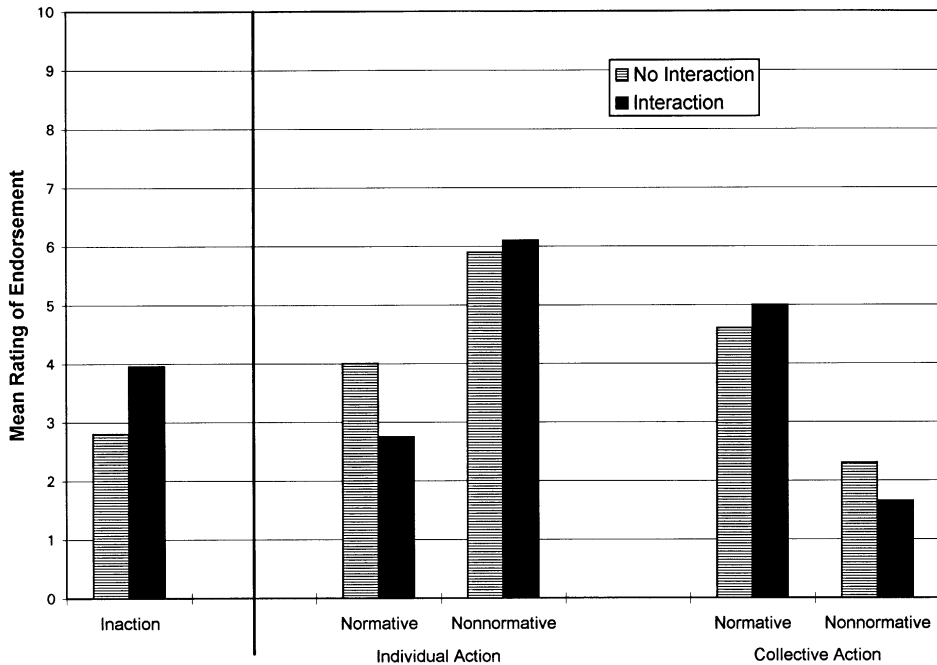


Figure 3. Experiment 2: mean rating of endorsement of each of five behavioural responses by participants in two ingroup interaction conditions

Individual Versus Collective and Normative Versus Nonnormative Action A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed ANOVA comparing participants in the two group interaction conditions on endorsement of individual versus collective and normative versus nonnormative actions yielded no significant main effect, $F(1,57) = 1.81$, n.s., or interaction effects (all three $F < 1.0$) involving the manipulation of group interaction. The main effect of the individual/collective distinction, $F(1,57) = 4.18$, $p < 0.05$, ($\eta^2 = 0.07$), and the individual/collective by normative/nonnormative interaction, $F(1,57) = 8.01$, $p < 0.01$, ($\eta^2 = 0.12$) were both significant. Subsequent pairwise comparisons, using Newman-Keuls procedure ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicated that participants gave greater endorsement to individual nonnormative action than to individual normative or collective nonnormative action. Collective normative action also received significantly greater endorsement than collective nonnormative action.

Behavioral Choice

The single action actually carried out by each participant yielded the frequency data presented in Figure 4. These data were analysed in two separate analyses, each using an hierarchical log-linear modelling approach.

Inaction For this analysis the participants' selected responses were recorded to produce a dichotomous inaction/action variable (collapsing the four actions). Thus, the comparison is between the selection of inaction versus any form of action. The initial model (hypothesizing independence of group interaction (G) and inaction/action (A)) included the main effects of group interaction and the main effect of

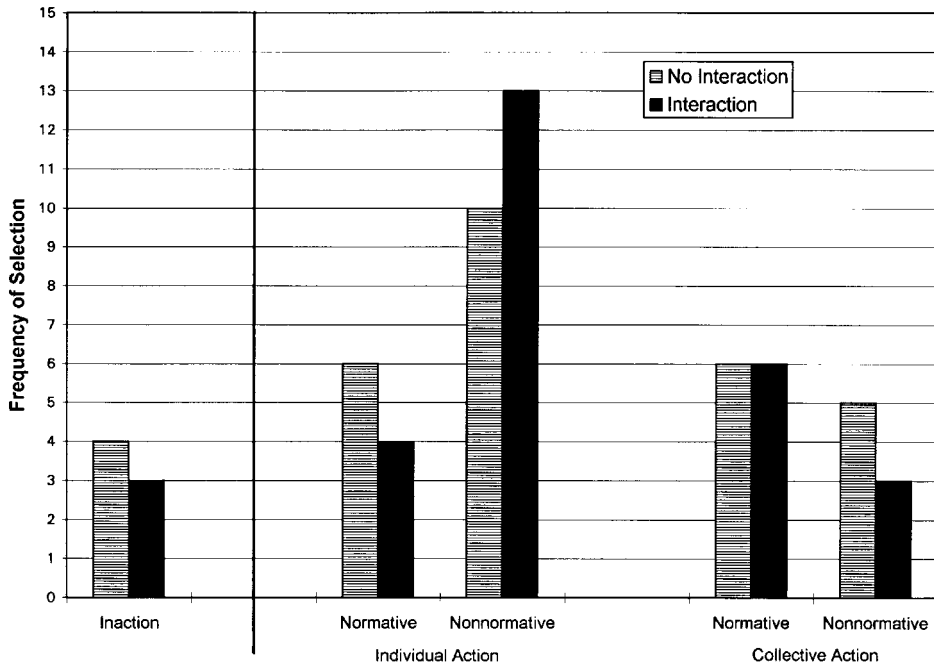


Figure 4. Experiment 2: frequency of selection of each of five behavioural responses by participants in two ingroup interaction conditions

inaction/action (G)(A). Very few participants in either condition selected the inaction option (three in the group interaction condition and four in the no interaction control). Thus, the introduction of the interaction between the group interaction variable and inaction/action (AG) contributed almost nothing to the fit of the model.

Individual versus Collective and Normative versus Nonnormative Action The second analysis included those participants who took some form of action ($n = 53$), and used an hierarchical log-linear modelling approach to examine the effects of group interaction on preference for individual versus collective and normative versus nonnormative action. The initial model (hypothesizing independence of group interaction and the two response distinctions) included the main effects of group interaction (G), individual/collective (I), and normative/nonnormative (N) as well as the individual/collective by normative/nonnormative interaction (IN). Neither of the remaining two-way interactions (group interaction by individual/collective (GI), and group interaction by normative/nonnormative (GN)), nor the three-way interaction contributed significantly to the fit of the model. Thus, the initial model was the optimal model, indicating that selection of individual versus collective and normative versus nonnormative action was not affected by manipulation of group interaction.

Discussion

The prediction that ingroup interaction would result in increased endorsement of collective actions in response to tokenism received no support. The present manipu-

lation represented a substantial increase in interaction and familiarity between disadvantaged group members. If the individualistic nature of the original paradigm de-emphasized group level identities and thus prevented group-level behaviour (collective action), increased interaction of this kind should have produced increased endorsement of collective action. However, both the rating scale (Figure 3) and the data from the actual behaviour chosen (Figure 4) show no increase in collective action in the group interaction condition. Participants show stronger endorsement of individual nonnormative action than individual normative and collective nonnormative actions. Although the difference in endorsement of individual nonnormative and collective normative action did not reach statistical significance, the frequency data (Figure 4) shows that individual nonnormative action remains the behaviour of choice in both conditions. Again, the robustness and strength of the preference for individual nonnormative action by victims of tokenism appears relatively clear.

Interpretations of non-significant results must always be made cautiously. However, we performed a series of univariate *t*-tests comparing the group interaction condition to the no-interaction control on endorsement of each of the five response options. This is the least conservative *post hoc* test of mean differences. The statistical power of these *t*-tests was good. Given an alpha level of $p = 0.05$ and the expectation of a medium effect size ($f = 0.25$), the power of each of these tests is approximately 0.60. Yet, none of these five *t*-tests was significant.

In addition to reasonable statistical power of the test, methodologically this manipulation represents a substantial alteration of the paradigm; a manipulation at least comparable to manipulations of group interaction used in experimental research in deindividuation (e.g. Orive, 1984; Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1982; Reicher, 1984) and group cohesion (Dion, 1973; Hogg & Hardie, 1992). Yet, it appears to have had no effect on the actions of disadvantaged-group members faced with the discriminatory conditions of tokenism. So, although we remain cautious in our interpretations, this lack of an effect of group interaction is surprising.

One possible explanation for the lack of effect of interaction is provided by Reicher, Spears and Postmes (1995), who show that the salience of the ingroup can, under some circumstances, be reduced by the actual presence of other ingroup members by individuating the individual participants (making them aware of their own individual identities). This interpretation would hold that in the present study the interaction with the ingroup prior to the task individuated the participants. Thus, rather than enhancing their identify as a group member the interaction undermined their psychological connection with the ingroup. This interpretation points to an important direction for future research. The present findings appear to demonstrate that ingroup interaction *per se* is inadequate to produce collective action in response to tokenism. What remains to be considered is whether other specific forms of ingroup interactions can lead to a collective response.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present experiments replicate and extend the original 'tokenism' findings of Wright and his colleagues (Wright *et al.*, 1990). It appears that, in terms of disadvantaged group behaviour, tokenism represents a unique intergroup context unlike

the closed context of complete discrimination or the open context of a meritocracy. Disadvantaged group members faced with tokenism tend to avoid the disruptive collective action preferred by those confronted with complete discrimination. However, they also show little interest in inaction or individual normative action—the responses preferred by those who believe the system to be open. Instead, tokenism leads to a consistent preference for individual nonnormative behaviour. The present studies show that this preference is maintained when the target of the tokenism is a real-world social category and when ingroup members have prior direct face-to-face contact.

Although the present replications and extensions are a necessary first step in establishing the tokenism phenomenon, there remain a number of relevant questions yet to be answered. First, it should be recognized that even with the important extensions made in these two experiments, the basic paradigm used by Wright *et al.* (1990) has been maintained. This leaves open the possibility that the tokenism finding may result from some particular aspect of the paradigm itself. For example, the preference for the nonnormative form of individual action may result more from a rejection of the particular normative alternative, rather than from a genuine preference for nonnormative behaviour. Participants may not actually wish to protest, but having rejected the idea of a retest, have no other individual response option. The present paradigm does improve on much of the previous research by offering an array of five alternative responses. However, even five alternatives may be limiting. Thus, selection of one action may actually be more reflective of the rejection of the other relevant alternatives.

Second, although the present research attempts to reflect some of the social realities of real-world intergroup relations, the use of faculty of study as the basis for categorization raises potential concerns about the generality of these findings. It is reasonable to assume that ascribed categories such as race or gender would carry greater historical and personal significance and may lead to stronger emotional, and perhaps behavioral, responses to intergroup contexts such as tokenism. The use of categories such as gender and race pose significant problems for laboratory research on discrimination (see footnote 1). However, the present findings could (and should) be tested with 'real-world' disadvantaged groups of this kind, perhaps using correlational research designs.

Finally, the present experiments provide only tentative insights into the possible explanations for the phenomenon. The present findings appear to cast doubt on the hypothesis that the avoidance of collective action in response to tokenism in Wright *et al.*'s (1990) original research was the result of inadequate identification with, or inadequate salience of, the ingroup. If identification with the artificial laboratory-created group was low and the salience of group memberships was low due to the individualistic nature of the paradigm, the use of a real-world relevant ingroup as the target of tokenism and the interactions with the ingroup should raise identification with and salience of the ingroup (cf. Reicher *et al.*, 1995). However, because the present studies did not include direct manipulations or measures of identification and salience, these interpretations are speculative at best.

Notwithstanding these concerns, these experiments do provide a necessary replication and extension of the 'tokenism' finding. Tokenism represents a societally relevant intergroup context and these findings shed light on the possibility that this discriminatory policy can be used by members of an advantaged group to reduce the likelihood

of collective action; collective action which could disrupt the discriminative policies of the advantaged group and reduce the intergroup inequalities.

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