(Dis)empowering prejudice through collective action: An elaborated social identity model

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Overview

1. ESIM and collective psychological (dis)empowerment

2. Post Brexit vote attacks as xenophobic empowerment
   – How action to defeat xenophobes works psychologically
Elaborated Social Identity Model

A model of the emergence and escalation of conflict in crowds (Reicher, 1996a,b; Stott & Reicher, 1998a,b; Drury & Reicher, 1999)

- Student protest at Westminster Bridge
- Anti-poll tax protests
- Football crowds
ESIM

A model of empowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2008; Drury, Evripidou, & Van Zomeren, 2015)

Comparison across events suggested
  – Pivotal role of empowerment
  – How empowerment occurs within events (stages, process, variables)
  – How disempowerment occurs
  – How (dis)empowerment endures over time
Empowerment

- A business /corporate category
- Originally an ‘activist’ category

‘that positive social psychological transformation, related to a sense of being able to (re)shape the social world, that takes place for members of subordinated groups who overturn (or at least challenge) existing relations of dominance’ (Drury & Reicher, 2009, p. 708)
Empowerment

Elements:
1. Change in social relations
2. Belief that social change is possible
3. Belief that we can take effective actions that contribute to social change (efficacy or agency)
4. Affective aspect: Joy, exhilaration
ESIM: the empowerment process

(a) Shared social identity (inclusiveness of ingroup boundaries)

(b) Expected social support for ingroup normative actions

(c) Impact on world through enacting identity: Collective Self-Objectification
No M11 link road campaign
1. Shared social identity: From a fragmented crowd to a united crowd
2. Expectations of support for ingroup normative action
3. Impact on world through enacting identity: Collective Self-Objectification
CSO is a joyful experience
Evidence for aspects of CSO

1. Identity-congruence (Drury, Choudhury, Evripidou, Bransgrove, & Sumner, in prep)
Evidence for aspects of CSO

2. Congruence of activity or outcome?

(Drury et al., in prep)
How the Brexit referendum empowered xenophobes
Sudden rise in xenophobic & racist attacks immediately after Brexit vote

- Hate crimes reported to the police increased by 57%.
- People told ‘go back to your country’ in the street and on public transport.
- Damage to shops, restaurants, mosques and other Muslim targets.
- Anti-Polish graffiti.
Legitimization and/or empowerment?
How the Brexit referendum was framed

• A widely-held understanding that a vote for Brexit was a vote against ‘foreigners’
  – ‘taking our country back’ in relation to
  • ‘foreign’ rule
  • migrants.
What were the social categories?

For some:

• ‘British’ (or ‘English’)

• Often ‘white’

• Defined as having opposing interests to ‘foreigners’

• Perceive the ingroup as (till now) a ‘victim’ of these ‘foreigners’
Meta-perception

1. The pro-Brexit referendum outcome conveyed (to the xenophobe) ‘what other British people think’.

2. The xenophobe then perceives a match between own identity and the position of the ‘majority’.
   – s/he now believes that ‘everyone else’ (white British) is as anti-foreigner as s/he is
How Brexit vote empowered xenophobes

• Ingroup boundaries are now extended
  – the ingroup of racist/xenophobes is now perceived to be larger than before the referendum

• ‘We’ (xenophobes) are now the majority, 52%

(a) Shared social identity (inclusiveness of ingroup boundaries)
How Brexit vote empowered xenophobes

(b) Expected social support for ingroup normative actions

Expecting:

• Emotional support
• Practical support
• Anticipated action, enabling coordination
How Brexit empowered xenophobes

(c) Impact on world through enacting identity: Collective Self-Objectification

• Since identity is defined in terms of hostility to ‘foreigners’, more hostile action against ‘foreigners’ is the result.

• As CSO is itself empowering, this could be a vicarious virtuous circle for them
Disempowering the xenophobes

Actions that realize the participants’ shared identity are particularly rewarding

Therefore, in relation to the xenophobes, we need to target things

a) To do with SSI
b) To do with expected support
c) To do with CSO
(a) A not-so shared social identity

Challenging the supposed ‘consensus’:

• Disabusing them of the illusion that their views are widely shared

• Challenging them can undermine their belief that others now regard racism and xenophobia as acceptable
  – Doing nothing in response to hate crimes could be interpreted as implying that such actions are now acceptable.
(b) Undermining expectations of support

- Prevent them mobilizing support by acting particularly against their coordinated activity
(c) Challenging their identity-realization

C.1 Prevent their organization

Premises: practical adequacy

• BBC prison study (Reicher & Haslam, 2006)

• How No Platform worked
  – A challenge to practical adequacy (vs the idealist tactic of argument)
(c) Challenging their identity-realization

C.1 Prevent their organization
Disorganization feels disempowering and limits action

Evripidou & Drury (2013)
(c) Challenging their identity-realization

C.1 Prevent their organization

Study 1: incongruent action was disempowering

Study 2: (Drury et al., in prep)
(c) Challenging their identity-realization

C.2 Make identities that are antagonistic to theirs more viable

• Asserting collective identities antagonistic to theirs.
• Well-organized and -attended groups and activities based on international class solidarity
• Making such solidarity more practically adequate than the racist vision.
Disempowering the xenophobes

Back to legitimization

• Empowerment (efficacy) and legitimacy have usually been conceptualized as separate and distinct dimensions.

• But, in political terms, they can be causally related:
  – A movement’s ability to organize and be effective is one of the ways that it gains political credibility
Disempowering the xenophobes

Back to legitimization: Some evidence

Jiménez-Moya, Miranda, González, Drury, & Saavedra (in subm)
Conclusions

A major caveat: the problem of the state

Future of EU nationals in UK more uncertain after May comments

Tory leadership hopeful’s refusal to guarantee position of European citizens goes against a cross-party consensus
Conclusions

A major caveat: the problem of the state
(Dis)empowering prejudice through collective action: Take-home message

• The Brexit referendum was framed as ‘anti-foreigner’ and the result told xenophobes ‘what other people think’, empowering them

• Empowerment is a concept helping to explain both the rise in xenophobic attacks and what we can do about it
Acknowledgements

ESRC, ES/N01068X/1

Steve Reicher, Clifford Stott, Roger Ball, Fergus Neville
Sanj Choudhury, Atalanti Evripidou, Paul Bransgrove, Harry Sumner