

I can do it, because we can do it: Social identity is associated with the long-term growth of personal efficacy via group efficacy



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- Self-efficacy, the belief that one has the ability to perform new or difficult tasks (Bandura, 2001)
- May be rather **general** (e.g., 'that one can cope when things are difficult') or more **specific** (e.g., 'that one can cope when social relationships become difficult')
- and held with respect to the self as an **individual** - what we refer to as personal self-efficacy (e.g., 'I can cope') or as a member of a **collective** - what we refer to as group efficacy (e.g., 'we can cope').

- Greater efficacy beliefs tend to be beneficial.
- Faith in own abilities, see problems as challenges and experience less negative affect when faced with demanding tasks (Bandura, 2001).
- More persistent, willing to undertake new challenges and better able to deal with adversity



- People with lower self-efficacy are apt to doubt their own competency,
- perceive difficult tasks as anxiety inducing and give up more easily
- Blame themselves for failure, susceptible to stress, hopelessness and depression



- Many argue that efficacy can be strengthened (Bandura, 2006; Maddux & Gosselin, 2012)
- This idea underpins much of the thinking behind interventions that seek to promote positive youth development (Deane, Harré, Moore & Courtney, 2017; Sibthorpe, 2003)
- One form of this type of intervention, relates to **Adventure Education Programmes (AEPs)**.

AEPs seek to enhance personal self-efficacy by means of experiential learning, wherein groups of young people are placed into an unfamiliar outdoor situation, where they, with the help of trained instructors, are encouraged to undertake a series of demanding but achievable challenges



AEP's generally successful

- Whilst, a few studies fail to find effects (Mutz & Müller, 2016) or improvements that dissipate shortly after the intervention finishes (Ang, Farish & Lau, 2014), meta-analyses, and other reviews nevertheless, show that participation in AEPs often results in enhanced levels of personal efficacy (Deane & Harrod, 2014; Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards, 1997).
- Further, the improvements documented in studies that have incorporated randomized control designs and tracked outcomes over time have revealed that the increases in efficacy found immediately after the completion of these programmes may be sustained over several months (Dean et al., 2017; Hunter et al., 2010).

Why are AEP's successful?

- Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997).
- personal mastery experiences, observational learning, encouragement and positive affect
- a weakness of this class of explanation is, however, that they highlight the actions and reactions of people acting as isolated **individuals**.
- As a result, both the **social context** in which efficacy is developed and the nature of the **sources** by which self-efficacy may be improved are largely ignored.

- AEPs tend to be conducted in contexts where group membership and the achievement of group goals are crucial
- This is especially so with respect to the AEP which frames the structure of the current investigation - a 10-day voyage onboard the **'Spirit of New Zealand'**.
- The ostensible purpose of this programme is nautical education – Primary aim - to show young people that, when they mobilize themselves and others, they can overcome obstacles that might at first seem impossible



- Aims are achieved by placing people into groups and then presenting them with a series of challenges that can only be met through high levels of teamwork.

- On 1st day, participants are placed into a 10-person group known as the 'watch'. Remain in the same watch throughout the entire programme and all activities are carried out as part of the watch.

- Over the course of the voyage the watch is presented with an increasingly difficult series of goal-oriented activities (e.g., hoisting the sails) that can only be completed when group members show high levels of intragroup communication, social support and collective collaboration.



- Our thinking on the processes involved is, influenced by the social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987).

- According to this framework when people define themselves in terms of group memberships, they begin to establish a social identity - a sense of 'we' or 'us'

- When this is done in a meaningful way the beliefs, values and attributes of the group are incorporated into a person's sense of self. Social identities have important ramifications for how group members interpret the world around them, connect with others, and achieve self-worth (Hunter et al. 2017).

- Of particular importance to the present investigation, however, is the idea that social identities can provide a path to improved personal empowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2005).



- In the context of an AEP, social identity as a watch member has the potential to affect self-efficacy in a number of ways.

- This identity can, for example, provide **norms** that guide behaviour and thereby reduce uncertainty when participants are placed into an unfamiliar outdoor situation

- Intragroup interaction can provide the assurance of social, intellectual and material **support**. This support can help **reduce stress, encourage active engagement, and provide access to group resources** that help individuals achieve their personal goals.



- An especially important way in which the watch social identity can foster the development of personal efficacy relates to the **nature of the challenges** that are encountered during an AEP.
- Many of these challenges are crucial to the personal goals of participants (e.g., sailing the vessel), yet involve tasks (e.g., hoisting the sails) that require a series of coordinated collective activities to ensure their successful completion (e.g., pulling ropes in sync).
- Social identification as a watch member, in defining 'who' group members 'are' and what they should 'do' provides a 'blueprint' for such activities (Drury & Reicher, 2009).
- Social identity constitutes the **"mechanism by which people coordinate their actions and function as effective social beings"** (Greenaway et al., 2015, p. 3). Thus, group members can come to believe that together they can undertake challenges that might otherwise seem impossible.



- Taking part in collective activities, and encouraging others to do so, may be one means by which group members can develop a positive sense of personal self-efficacy
- Perhaps more importantly, though is the outcome of these collective activities.
- When the self is defined in terms of a social identity the success or failure of the group can be crucial (Haslam, 2017). This is because people tend to internalize and come to see themselves as possessing the attributes associated with the group.
- Thus, if the group is seen as strong, capable and efficacious then it follows that the individual may come to see themselves as strong, capable and efficacious. If, however, the group is seen as weak and ineffective then the individual, may come to see themselves as weak, ineffective and lacking agency.



- Evidence consistent with these ideas has been reported by Drury and Reicher. This work, reveals that when crowd members took part in subjectively successful collective activities, they often reported feelings of group empowerment.
- Moreover, these outcomes appeared to be long lasting and, were often credited, by the participants themselves, as enabling empowerment in other aspects of their personal lives.
- Group members enact or actualize their social identities, wherein the display of identity relevant behavior (e.g., crowd protest activities) provides direct evidence of the in-group's agency (e.g., the ability to thwart police actions).



- Test these ideas in the context of an AEP, with respect to efficacy
- If the 'watch' group to which one identifies is perceived to be efficacious, (i.e., believes that its goals may be achieved through collective effort, van Zomeren, Leach & Spears, 2010, p. 1095), then this sense of **group efficacy could in turn promote a sense of personal efficacy**.

- In the present study we sought to test this hypothesis in the setting of a 10-day developmental voyage
- In such circumstances, there is likely to be broad agreement on who the participants are (e.g., members of the 'watch') and what they need to do (e.g., co-operate with one-another) to achieve a common and meaningful goal (i.e., sail a large ocean going vessel).
- Further, because the enactment of identity relevant behavior (e.g., coping with life on-board, cooperating with one-another) provides direct evidence of the in-group's agency (e.g., actually sailing the vessel), we, hypothesize that changes in personal self-efficacy will be relatively long lasting.
- Two studies are conducted in order to test these ideas. The central hypothesis in each study is that participants who undertake a 10-day developmental voyage will experience elevated personal efficacy, and that social identity will be associated with elevated personal self-efficacy when the group in question is perceived to show group efficacy.
- Study 1 tested this hypothesis, immediately before and after the completion of a 10-day voyage. Study 2 tested this hypothesis, immediately before, immediately after, and then again, 9-months following the 10-day voyage.

b)

Study 1

Voyage and non-voyage efficacy scores at time 1 and time 2.

Condition	Self-efficacy	Time 1	Time 2
Voyage	Personal	76.83 (11.09)	82.62 (11.21)***
Non-voyage	Personal	77.10 (9.48)	76.69 (11.59)

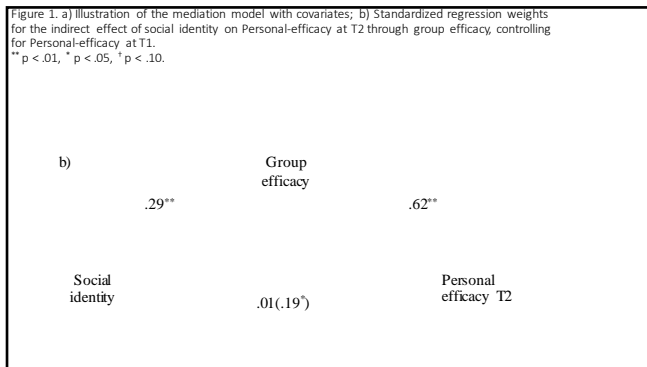
Notes. Voyage $N = 57$, Non-voyage $N = 53$. Higher scores equate to greater levels of efficacy.

I can rely on my coping abilities when things get difficult, 'I can control my feelings' (Alpha = .86)

All responses were scored from 0 to 100 (0-I cannot do at all, 100 - Highly certain I can do)

*** $p < .001$

Figure 1. a) Illustration of the mediation model with covariates; b) Standardized regression weights for the indirect effect of social identity on Personal-efficacy at T2 through group efficacy, controlling for Personal-efficacy at T1.
 ** p < .01, * p < .05, † p < .10.



Study 2

Efficacy	Baseline	Time1	Time 2	Time 3
Personal	75.96	77.15	85.33**	81.71**
	(584)	(11.13)	(10.59)	(9.3)

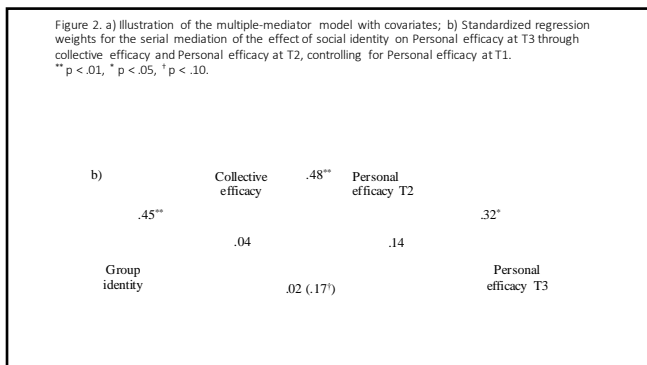
Baseline, N = 62, Voyage, N = 91

** p < .001

I can rely on my coping abilities when things get difficult, 'I can control my feelings' (Alpha = .93)

All responses were scored from 0 to 100 (0- I cannot do at all, 100 - Highly certain I can do) so that higher scores reflected greater levels of efficacy

Figure 2. a) Illustration of the multiple-mediator model with covariates; b) Standardized regression weights for the serial mediation of the effect of social identity on Personal efficacy at T3 through collective efficacy and Personal efficacy at T2, controlling for Personal efficacy at T1.
 ** p < .01, * p < .05, † p < .10.



- Findings suggest that taking part in a 10-day voyage can lead to increases in personal efficacy that can be relatively long lasting (i.e., of 9-months duration).
- Findings are important because of the crucial role efficacy plays in adolescent development.
- In demonstrating that social identity via group efficacy makes a contribution to these outcomes, the current investigation is one of the few that points to the theoretical mechanisms by which AEPs produce improvements in efficacy
- Group based processes - important consequences

- They demonstrate for example, that the ideas of group and personal empowerment explicated in the ethnographic work of Drury et al., hold in the context of youth engagement with AEP's and in terms of the narrower and more easily measured constructs of group and personal efficacy (see also Drury et al., 2015).
- Likewise, to the extent that the social identity of the participants was bound up the group's ability to actually sail the vessel, the results suggest that **social connections may be especially likely to foster lasting changes in agency, when the group's ability to bring about change is a reflection of the group's social identity** (Drury & Reichert 2005).

Whilst many studies examine how personal efficacy impacts on young peoples' outcomes (Hornik et al., 2010; Schnell et al., 2013), few assess the sources that impact on personal efficacy (Cocking & Drury, 2004; Guan & So, 2016).

In so far as, our results show that social identity, via group efficacy, is associated with increased personal efficacy (at T2 and T3), they highlight the importance of groups and their outcomes in this regard.

Past research in this area, has tended to emphasize the primacy of the personal self

Bandura, for instance, has suggested that personal feelings of competence are essential for the emergence of group based competence (e.g., Bandura, 2001, p. 16).

The results discerned in the present work, however, suggest that the reverse is also possible – that **group level constructs can influence personal efficacy**. This might be especially true for **young people and amongst those for whom social connections are especially important** (Scaiff et al., 2016).

Weaknesses and Shortcomings

- Although our findings suggest that the link between social identity and increased personal efficacy is mediated through group efficacy, it is important to acknowledge that the nature of **our data prevents the establishment of a specific causal sequence.**
- In both studies **social identity and group efficacy were not manipulated**, but instead, assessed at time 2 only.
- Future research might overcome this issue by incorporating measures of social identity and group efficacy at multiple time points as a part of a cross lagged design. Doing so, would allow us to infer the causal direction of our effects with more confidence.
- Moreover, such an approach would additionally allow us to tease apart the nature of the relationship between social identity and group efficacy. In the existing literature, **it has largely been assumed that social identity predicts group efficacy**, however, in the context in which this study was conducted it is likely that the development of participants **social identity would interact and be affected by the group** as they engage with shipboard endeavors (see vanZanten, Leach & Spears, 2010).

Social Cure

- On the whole our findings are consistent with the social cure approach to health and well-being (Haslam et al., 2018). Research derived from this approach has documented that groups and social identities contribute to the growth of resilience, well-being and recovery from depression (Cruwys et al., 2014; Haslam et al., 2018; Scarf et al., 2016).
- The current study, in demonstrating how social identity via group based efficacy is associated with increased personal efficacy amongst adolescents who take part in a particular AEP, adds to this corpus by drawing attention to one important pathway by which social identity can contribute to these outcomes.