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The Challenge of Merging: Merger Patterns, Premerger Status, and Merger Support

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Employees of merging organizations often show resistance to the merger. The employees' support depends on the companies' premerger status and on the merger pattern. Based on an intergroup perspective, three studies were conducted to investigate the influence of premerger status (high, low) and merger pattern (assimilation, integration-equality, integration-proportionality, transformation) on participants' support for a pending organizational merger. Students (Study 1) and employees (Study 2) had to take the perspective of employees of a fictitious merging organization. Study 3 investigated students' perceptions of a potentially pending university merger using a 2 (status) $\times$ 3 (merger pattern: assimilation, integration-equality, integration-proportionality) design. Across all studies, the low-status group favored integration-equality and transformation whereas the high-status group preferred integration-proportionality and assimilation. Perceived threat mediated the effects. Legitimacy was a stronger mediator for effects of the low-status group.

Keywords: *organizational merger; merger patterns; premerger status; organizational dominance*

Globalization and the rapid development of the new economy have forced many organizations to cooperate nationally and internationally, often via the process of merging. Unfortunately, approximately two thirds of organizational mergers do not meet their expectations (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996). Although organizational mergers are fundamentally intergroup situations, researchers have only recently started to look at the

merger processes from an intergroup perspective (Haunschild, Moreland, & Murrell, 1994; Terry & Callan, 1998; van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). Given the prevalence of organizational mergers and the low success rates they produce, it would be useful to understand the preconditions under which such mergers are likely to succeed or fail. This article considers responses to an organizational merger from an intergroup perspective. Organizational mergers are characterized by a certain structural condition—two companies merge to become one company. Hence, a new group identity is imposed on the group members of the merging organizations (Haunschild et al., 1994). This often creates an us versus them dynamic, which refers to a heightened salience of the premerger group membership. These intergroup dynamics play an important role at the beginning of a merger process and may jeopardize the success of a merger (Blake & Mouton, 1985; Buono

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& Bowditch, 1989). Drawing on social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and on the social identity model of postmerger identification (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001), the present research extends previous research by focusing on the premerger phase and examining the joint influences of members' premerger status and perceived merger patterns on merger support.

A SOCIAL IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE ON MERGERS

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; see also Hogg & Abrams, 1988) is a general theory of group processes and intergroup relations. The important assumption of this theory is that individuals perceive the social world in terms of social categories. The perceived membership in social categories can also contribute to the self-definition of the individuals. In other words, people define themselves not only on the basis of their individual characteristics and their interpersonal relations (i.e., personal identity) but also in terms of characteristics of an ingroup to which they belong (i.e., social identity). Therefore, group membership transforms individual interest and motivation into collective interest and motivation. Hence, perceptions of group-level consequences should impact on individual evaluations and decisions (de Cremer & van Vugt, 1999; Haslam, 2001). It is assumed that individuals strive to achieve or maintain a positive self-concept. The evaluation of social identity valence is derived from membership in social groups or categories and their value connotations in comparison to relevant reference groups.

The theory has been applied in studying organizational processes (Haslam, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Moreover, SIT has been successfully applied to understand the intergroup dynamics during organizational mergers (Terry, 2001; van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). This research indicates that sociostructural characteristics of the relations between the merging groups impact on intergroup conflict and employee responses to the merger.

STATUS DIFFERENCES IN ORGANIZATIONAL MERGERS

Most organizational mergers are not mergers of equals (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996; van Oudenhoven & de Boer, 1995). A merger often results in the heightened salience of status differences between the organizations involved, which has crucial implications for the merger process (Terry & O'Brien, 2001). Following SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), membership in low-status groups fails to provide members with a positive social identity. Because of the heightened salience of intergroup status differences during the merger, members of the low-status

group should feel more threatened (Terry & O'Brien, 2001) and may seek to enhance their status position (Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993). In contrast, members of high-status groups have a positive social identity and may try to maintain their status position (Ellemers, Doosje, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1992). A decrease of their status position within the merger should also be threatening for them. Hence, both groups should be motivated to optimize their position within the merged group, and their cost-benefit evaluations should reflect the specific concern of their group.

Based on this perspective, van Knippenberg and van Leeuwen (2001; van Leeuwen, 2001) put forward a social identity model of postmerger identification that takes the status relations into account. They suggest that the dominant organization in the merger is much more likely to define the character of the merged company. Hence, employees of the dominant organization are more prone to feel a sense of continuity of their premerger identity in the postmerger identity and to maintain their premerger position. Consequently, employees of the dominant premerger organization will identify more strongly with the merged company. In contrast, the employees of the low-status company are less likely to have a sense of continuity and hence will identify less with the merged organization. The model has been confirmed in previous research (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Monden, & de Lima, 2002). Furthermore, even prior to the actual merger the members of the involved groups expect the high-status group to dominate the merger (Dackert, Jackson, Brenner, & Johansson, 2003). Hence, members of the high-status organization should be more willing to support the merger in comparison to members of the low-status organization.

MERGER PATTERNS

It is important to differentiate between status and dominance within the merger. These concepts are not necessarily the same and can even be independent of each other (van Knippenberg et al., 2002). Status differences are defined by the comparison between two groups before the merger. The dimensions of comparison depend on the context. In the organizational merger context, these dimensions are mainly defined by the economic factors prior to the merger. In contrast, the power relations within the merged company define dominance within the merger.

The high-status group often dominates the merger. However, the organizational dominance of the high-status group depends on how the organizations are merging. Schoennauer (1967) differentiated between

three major merger patterns: absorb, blend, and combine. The absorb pattern implies an assimilation of the low-status group into the high-status group. A survey by Schweiger and Weber (1989)¹ revealed that the assimilation pattern is employed in about 49% of mergers. The blend pattern reflects a merger pattern where the former identities of both organizations are still recognizable. Thus, the previous organizations are integrated into one organization while not forsaking their premerger identities. This kind of merger pattern is also common in organizational contexts (about 31%; Schweiger & Weber, 1989). Finally, the combine pattern reflects a new group with no relation to the old premerger groups. It represents a kind of transformation of the old subgroup identities into a totally new group identity (about 8%; Schweiger & Weber, 1989).

Previous research has shown that the different merger patterns have an important influence on employees' willingness to support the merger (Mottola, Bachman, Gaertner, & Dovidio, 1997; Schoennauer, 1967). For instance, Mottola et al. (1997) found that group members are more supportive of an integration pattern (i.e., blend) and transformation pattern (i.e., combine) compared to an assimilation pattern (i.e., absorb) because these patterns were perceived as less threatening in relation to job status and job security. Although our research builds on this research, we are interested in how perceived status differences moderate the support of merger patterns.²

We assume that the heightened salience of status differences should lead the employees of the premerger companies to support different merger patterns. Following SIT, we argue that in the merger situation both organizations strive to optimize their position in the merged group (Terry, 2001). Research by Terry and colleagues (Terry & Callan, 1998; Terry & O'Brien, 2001) showed that low- and high-status organizations do actually compete to optimize their position in the new organization. This striving for power within the merged organization should play an important role at the beginning of the merger and should influence the employees' endorsement of the merger. Hence, SIT predicts that group members will be primarily concerned with the evaluation of costs and benefits related to their group membership (de Cremer & van Vugt, 1999; Haslam, 2001). In other words, members of different organizations should not agree about what the best pattern is in terms of costs and benefits for the merged organization as a whole. Rather, group membership should bias group members' evaluations of a merger pattern in terms of the extent to which the pattern favors their premerger group. Before the hypotheses are outlined in more detail, we first want to make an important differentiation regarding the integration pattern.

INTEGRATION AND UNEQUAL STATUS GROUPS?

If unequal status groups merge, two merger patterns might be differentiated that match the definition of an integration pattern. One possibility is integration according to an equality rule. In this case, each merger partner would have the same status within the new company and would bring an equal degree of their premerger identity into the merger. This variant was applied in previous experimental studies (Mottola et al., 1997) and represents the common understanding of an integration pattern (Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1988). However, a second possibility is a proportional integration. In this case, the merger partners' premerger status would define their impact within the integrated organization.

Both of the aforementioned strategies allow for integration because in both merger patterns the companies keep parts of their premerger culture and identity. However, the two strategies differ with regard to the power relations within the merged company. The integration-equality pattern aims for equal power relations, whereas the integration-proportionality pattern aims for power relations in line with the premerger status. This differentiation has not been taken into account in previous merger research. We assume that premerger groups diverging in status support the idea of integration. However, they might favor different ideas of integration depending on their premerger status. Hence, there might be diverging perspectives between the premerger groups with regard to the integration patterns they support.

PREDICTIONS

Based on our previous reasoning, we argue that the support for a specific merger pattern is moderated by the status of the merged groups. Both groups strive to optimize their respective position within the merged group (Terry, 2001) by experiencing continuity of their former group membership (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). For the low-status group, the integration-proportionality and the assimilation patterns do not provide an optimal position within the merged company and there is less sense of continuity of their premerger group. These patterns create salient status differences and therefore a more negative social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Consequently, if individuals identify strongly with their group, these patterns should engender feelings of threat regarding such a merger (Fugate, Kinicki, & Scheck, 2002; Terry, 2001; Terry & O'Brien, 2001). In other words, because these patterns heighten the salience of their low-status position, group members are likely to feel that members of their organization will experience negative consequences regarding job and career opportunities. In turn, this perceived threat

should decrease merger support (Bachman, 1993; Dackert et al., 2003; Mottola et al., 1997).

In addition, the merger patterns might also influence beliefs about the intergroup context, which are, according to SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), critical to an understanding of people's reactions to an organizational merger (Terry & Callan, 1998; Terry, Callan, & Carey, 2001). According to SIT, the extent to which group members perceive their status position to be legitimate (i.e., the perception of a deserved outcome of a just procedure) is an important determinant of their identification with group. The status positions are in question during a merger and redefined by the merger pattern. Thus, support for a specific merger pattern should be influenced by legitimacy perceptions in relation to this pattern. Moreover, there is evidence that attitudes of employees during a merger are influenced by perceptions of legitimacy (Terry & O'Brien, 2001) and procedural justice (Lipponen, Olkkonen, & Miolonen, 2004). Hence, in addition to the perception of threat based on group membership, perceptions of legitimacy regarding the merger pattern should also influence merger support. For the low-status group, the integration-proportionality and the assimilation pattern should represent a less legitimate way to merge because these patterns consolidate or enhance status differences and therefore reduce the potential power in the new organization.

In contrast, the integration-equality and the transformation patterns imply that the low-status group will have equal status within the merger. Status equality is explicitly provided in the integration-equality pattern. The transformation strategy creates a totally new identity and hence at least provides an opportunity to realize status equality. Therefore, these patterns offer a more positive identity for the low-status group members and hence are less threatening regarding such a merger. The low-status group members should also evaluate the latter two patterns as more legitimate than the other two because these patterns reduce status differences and provide equal power for the merging organizations.

For members of the high-status organization, the assimilation and the integration-proportionality pattern (compared to transformation and integration-equality) imply a stronger sense of continuity and a more optimal position within the merged group. Hence, high-status group members can maintain their status and their positive identity under such circumstances. On one hand, this should lead to lower levels of threat regarding job and career opportunities because membership in a high-status group may provide advantages. On the other hand, given that the high-status group keeps their premerger status position within the assimilation and integration-proportionality patterns, these patterns should also foster more positive beliefs about the legiti-

macy of the merger arrangements. Consequently, the high-status group should support these two patterns more than the other two in which their status and power is reduced (integration-equality) or possibly reduced (transformation).

To summarize, an interaction between merger pattern and premerger status on merger support was hypothesized. Low-status group members were expected to prefer the integration-equality and transformation patterns, whereas high-status group members were expected to prefer the assimilation and integration-proportionality patterns (Hypothesis 1). In addition, we hypothesized an interaction between merger pattern and premerger status on perceived threat and perceived legitimacy. The low-status premerger group should perceive more threat and less legitimacy in the assimilation and integration-proportional patterns (compared to the other merger patterns). In contrast, the high-status premerger group should perceive less threat and more legitimacy in the assimilation and integration-proportional patterns (Hypothesis 2). Finally, we hypothesized that both threat and legitimacy would mediate the effects of premerger status and merger pattern on merger support (Hypothesis 3).

STUDY 1

We started this research by using a scenario that described hypothetical merger situations. This technique has been successfully employed in various merger studies (Mottola et al., 1997; Rentsch & Schneider, 1991; van Oudenhoven & de Boer, 1995). Furthermore, the design of the study is relatively difficult to implement within a natural context. Hence, the scenario approach seemed to be a useful technique to start with.

Method

Participants. In Study 1, 148 undergraduate students, comprising 64 students from the University of Graz and 84 students from the University of Jena, participated. Ages varied between 18 and 52 years ($M = 22.44$, $SD = 4.46$); 18 participants were men, 130 were women. Because there were no major differences in age and gender distribution in the two university samples and preliminary analyses indicated no main effect or interactions involving participants' sample population, this factor was not included in the further analyses.

Design and procedure. A 2 (status: high, low) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern: assimilation, integration-equality, integration-proportionality, transformation) between-subjects design was used. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions. All materials³ used in the study were provided via questionnaires that were handed out at the beginning of a lecture. The independent variables were

TABLE 1: Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent Variables (Study 1)

Premerger Status	Merger Pattern							
	Assimilation		Integration-Proportionality		Integration-Equality		Transformation	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Support								
High status	3.78	1.20	3.53	1.16	3.31	0.76	3.29	1.24
Low status	3.13	1.13	3.24	0.94	3.97	0.75	3.64	1.14
Threat								
High status	4.17	1.46	3.89	1.61	4.52	0.95	4.54	1.45
Low status	5.13	1.15	4.91	0.92	4.90	0.89	4.58	1.27
Legitimacy								
High status	3.58	1.71	4.66	1.16	5.19	1.19	4.58	1.26
Low status	3.18	1.72	3.29	1.27	5.72	0.97	4.89	1.42

NOTE: Judgments were made on 7-point scales (1 = *no support, low threat, low legitimacy*; 7 = *strong support, high threat, high legitimacy*).

manipulated via a written scenario that described the merger (cf. Mottola et al., 1997; Rentsch & Schneider, 1991). The participants had to imagine that they were employees of either a low-status or a high-status organization that was going to merge with another organization, and they received information concerning the planned merger pattern.

The scenarios consisted of three parts: (a) a standard introduction to manipulate status, (b) the specific merger pattern, and (c) a standard conclusion that was the same for all conditions. The two merging companies were named ACME BANK and BOLT BANK. The former fictitious name was used for the high-status company, whereas the latter was used for the low-status company. Status was manipulated by describing the companies differently on economic dimensions. The low-status company was described as being founded in 1990, a financial profitable organization that was domestically focused, and the shares were quoted at 12.21 Euro on the Frankfurt stock market. In contrast, the high-status company was described as being founded in 1919, a financial successful organization that acted worldwide, with shares at 40.88 Euro on the German stock market index. The size of both companies was kept constant by describing a similar number of branches and employees. Merger pattern was manipulated by varying the descriptions regarding the merged organization (see the appendix for a summary of the manipulations).

Dependent measures. The dependent variables followed directly after the scenario. If not stated otherwise, 7-point scales were used ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very strong*). First, a four-item scale measuring merger support (“How strong is your willingness to participate in the planned merger?”; “Do you think that the integration of both companies will lead to success?”; “Do you expect resistance from the employees of your company towards the planned merger?” [negatively worded]; and “Are you looking forward to the planned merger?”; adapted from van Oudenhoven & de Boer, 1995) was

included ($\alpha = .79$). Next, a six-item scale taken from Bachman (1993) was included to measure perceived threat (e.g., “I would be sure that I would keep my job” (negatively worded); “I would worry that my job status and authority would be jeopardized by the merger”; $\alpha = .89$; see Mottola et al., 1997, for the item list). The next two items tapped the respondent’s perceptions of the legitimacy of the merger (“The integration efforts are unfair.” (negatively worded); “The manner of the integration of the ACME Bank and the BOLT Bank could be perceived as fair under the given circumstances.”). The items were averaged, $r(144) = .69, p < .001$.

Afterward, participants had to answer one item that served as a manipulation check for status (“Which of both companies was more competent in the market-economy before the merger?”) ranging from 1 (*BOLT*) to 7 (*ACME*). For the low-status group, the items were reversed so that 1 indicated the outgroup and 7 indicated the ingroup. Finally, some demographic questions regarding gender, study course, and age followed.

Results

Manipulation check. A 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern) ANOVA yielded only the expected main effect of premerger status, $F(1, 140) = 233.62, p < .001, \eta^2 = .62$. Participants in the high-status condition perceived their ingroup to have higher status compared to the other organization ($M = 5.41, SD = 1.26$). In contrast, participants in the low-status condition agreed that their organization was lower in status ($M = 2.41, SD = 1.16$).

Merger support, perceived threat, and legitimacy. Separate 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern) ANOVAs were performed. The analysis on merger support yielded only the expected interaction, $F(3, 140) = 2.94, p = .036, \eta^2 = .06$. The pattern of means was as hypothesized (see Table 1). The low-status group supported integration-equality and transformation more than assimilation and integration-proportionality. In contrast, the high-status group

avored assimilation and integration-proportionality more than the other two merger patterns.

The analysis on perceived threat yielded a significant main effect of status, $F(1, 140) = 8.66, p = .004, \eta^2 = .06$. The employees of the low-status group reported higher perceived threat than the members of the high-status group ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.07$ vs. $M = 4.27, SD = 1.39$). The expected status by merger pattern interaction did not reach significance, $F(3, 140) = 1.54, p = .26, \eta^2 = .03$. Nevertheless, the pattern of means (see Table 1) was in the expected direction: Assimilation and integration-proportionality were more threatening for the low-status group than transformation and integration-equality. The reverse picture was observed in the high-status condition.

Finally, the analysis on perceived legitimacy revealed a main effect of merger pattern, $F(3, 140) = 16.08, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$. This effect however was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(3, 140) = 3.67, p = .014, \eta^2 = .07$. The pattern of means suggested that both groups perceived assimilation as less legitimate compared to integration-equality and transformation (see Table 1). A simple main effect analysis revealed that the interaction effect was mainly explained by the integration-proportionality condition. The low-status group perceived this condition as less legitimate compared to the high-status group, $F(1, 140) = 9.58, p = .002, \eta^2 = .06$. The high- and low-status group did not differ significantly on the other merger patterns.

Mediation analysis. To test the mediation hypothesis, we conducted a 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern) ANCOVA on merger support and with threat and legitimacy as covariates. Both threat, $F(1, 138) = 29.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .18$, and legitimacy, $F(1, 138) = 5.29, p = .02, \eta^2 = .04$, had a significant effect. Furthermore, the interaction effect was no longer significant, $F(3, 138) = 1.69, p = .17, \eta^2 = .03$. Hence, both covariates were explaining variance of the interaction term.

Although legitimacy appeared to be mediating the effects of premerger status and merger pattern on merger support, the pattern of means of merger support and legitimacy were quite different from each other. This was especially the case for the high-status group. In fact, simple regression analysis within the low- and high-status conditions revealed that legitimacy was only related to merger support in the low-status condition, $\beta = .51, t(73) = 5.00, p < .001$, and not in the high-status condition, $\beta = .08, t(71) = .71, p = .48$. The difference in the relations between legitimacy and support was significant, $z = 2.81, p = .002$. Thus, the mediation effects of legitimacy on merger support seem to hold only for the low-status group. To test this post hoc assumption, we had to use a different mediational analysis (for an explanation, see Hull, Tedlie, & Lehn, 1992; Yzerbyt, Muller, &

Judd, 2004). We included the legitimacy by status interaction in the ANCOVA. On one hand, this interaction tests one of the fundamental assumptions of the ANCOVA—the homogeneity of regressions. On the other hand, including this interaction can be also seen as testing the hypothesis that the covariate is a mediator only on one level of the status manipulation (Hull et al., 1992; Yzerbyt et al., 2004). Therefore, we conducted a 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern) ANCOVA on merger support with legitimacy and the legitimacy by status interaction as covariates. The analysis yielded a significant effect of legitimacy, $F(1, 138) = 16.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$, and of the legitimacy by status interaction, $F(1, 138) = 5.35, p = .02, \eta^2 = .04$. The status by merger pattern interaction was no longer significant, $F(3, 138) = .76, p = .52, \eta^2 = .02$. Hence, this post hoc analysis provided support for the assumption that legitimacy concerns are more important for the low-status group than for the high-status group with regard to merger support.

Discussion

Overall, the results of Study 1 supported our main hypothesis. Whereas the high-status group supported the integration-proportional and the assimilation patterns, the low-status group preferred the integration-equality and the transformation patterns. Thus, the high- and low-status group members had different perceptions about what constitutes the best merger pattern. Participants in the high-status condition supported the merger and evaluated it positively in the conditions where they kept their premerger status positions (i.e., assimilation and integration-proportionality). These patterns were less threatening for members of the high-status group compared to the other patterns. In contrast, the low-status group favored the integration-equality and the transformation patterns, both of which foster a perception of status equality. Therefore, these patterns were perceived as less threatening. Hence, threat related to group membership was a central mediator of the effects of status and merger pattern on support, replicating and extending past research (Bachman, 1993; Mottola et al., 1997).

Legitimacy concerns played an important role for the support of the merger as well. Mediational analyses revealed that legitimacy concerns have an independent effect from perceived threat. Although the effect was lower, it is still an important aspect of merger support. However, the pattern of means supported our second hypothesis only within the low-status group, and the mediational effects of legitimacy were stronger for the low-status group than for the high-status group. High- and low-status groups agreed that integration-equality and transformation are more legitimate ways to merge than assimilation. This might reflect shared social val-

ues regarding fair merger procedures. However, the merging groups disagreed regarding the integration-proportionality pattern. The high-status group was more likely than the low-status group to perceive it as legitimate, possibly because both groups are still represented within the merger. The different perceptions of the two groups support our suggestion that high- and low-status groups should have different perspectives regarding the integration pattern.

More important is the fact that legitimacy concerns did not mediate the effects of merger pattern on merger support among the high-status group. This suggests that legitimacy concerns regarding the merger patterns were less central to the support of a merger pattern for members of the high-status group. For them, it is more important to keep their status advantages within the merged company. This is only the case in the assimilation and the integration-proportionality conditions. Hence, the motivation to maintain their status within the merged company is less influenced by legitimacy concerns related to merger patterns. In contrast, legitimacy concerns are important for the low-status group. They want to enhance their status position by reaching an equal status position within the merged company—a condition that is also seen as legitimate for the merger.

STUDY 2

In Study 1, we used a sample of undergraduate students for evaluating a merger situation between two companies. However, it might be quite hard for students to imagine being an employee of a company and to identify with such a situation. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, we used a random sample of employees. Furthermore, we revised our Hypotheses 2 and 3. Based on the discussion earlier, we hypothesized that the low-status group would perceive more threat and less legitimacy in the assimilation and integration-proportional patterns (compared to the other merger patterns). In contrast, the high-status group should perceive less threat in the assimilation and the integration-proportional patterns and should perceive the assimilation condition as less legitimate than the other patterns (Hypothesis 2). With regard to mediation, we hypothesized that both threat and legitimacy are independent mediators of the effects of status and merger pattern on merger support. However, legitimacy should be a stronger mediator for the low-status group than for the high-status group (Hypothesis 3).

Finally, we included some new measures in the second study to test an underlying assumption we had in our first study. We assumed that the transformation pattern might foster a perception of status equality within the merged company. Although the results of our first study

were in line with this assumption, we wanted to measure this more directly.

Method

Participants. For Study 2, 136 employees in the area of Kent (United Kingdom) participated in the study. Participants' ages varied between 17 and 63 years ($M = 31.89$, $SD = 11.45$); 54 participants were men, 82 were women. The participants were on average more than 10 years employed ($M = 10.50$, $SD = 8.55$) and were working in many different business sectors (e.g., financial sector, services, education sector) and in many different jobs (e.g., manager, waiter/waitress, teacher, bank clerk). Hence, the sample was heterogeneous in terms of age, years of employment, job, and business sector.

Design and procedure. Again, a 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger patterns) between-subjects design was used. All participants were randomly assigned to the conditions. Questionnaires were handed out in the city center of Canterbury, in a train from Canterbury to London, and to parents of students. The independent variables were manipulated in the same way as in the Study 1. However, we also included bar charts that indicated the status differences between both companies and the merger patterns.

Dependent measures. If not stated otherwise, we used 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very strong*). Merger support ($\alpha = .71$) and perceived threat ($\alpha = .63$) were measured with the same scales as in Study 1. Afterward, two measures of the perceived prototypicality within the merged organization were included. The first one measured perceived continuity of group membership (adapted from van Leeuwen, 2001) by asking for the degree to which each company can be recognized within the merged company ("Within the merged company, the . . . can still clearly be recognised."). A perceived continuity score was computed by subtracting the outgroup score from the ingroup score. The second measure asked for the typicality of the two companies within the merged company ("The merged company is mostly typical of . . ."). As for perceived continuity, a difference score was created. Both measures were strongly correlated, $r(132) = .82$, $p < .001$, and preliminary analyses yielded similar effects for both measures. Therefore, we averaged both measures to one measure of perceived prototypicality within the merger. Values above zero indicated that the participants' premerger ingroup was more prototypical, and values below zero indicated that participants' premerger outgroup was more prototypical within the merged company (theoretical range = -6 to +6).

Next, perceived legitimacy was measured using the same items as in Study 1, $r(132) = .72$, $p < .001$. We

TABLE 2: Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent Variables (Study 2)

Premerger Status	Merger Pattern							
	Assimilation		Integration-Proportionality		Integration-Equality		Transformation	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Perceived prototypicality								
High status	3.41	1.94	2.23	1.22	0.53	1.35	-0.16	1.66
Low status	-5.35	1.18	-2.50	2.27	-0.61	1.37	-0.89	1.40
Support								
High status	3.81	1.18	4.03	0.93	3.28	1.22	3.53	0.86
Low status	3.19	1.14	3.51	1.23	4.01	1.10	4.18	0.82
Threat								
High status	4.25	1.36	4.17	0.97	4.69	0.70	4.84	0.88
Low status	5.16	0.82	4.95	1.39	4.50	0.69	4.77	1.03
Legitimacy								
High status	2.96	1.08	4.66	1.06	4.19	1.25	3.42	0.95
Low status	2.06	0.73	3.28	0.91	4.92	0.64	4.00	1.01

NOTE: Judgments were made on 7-point scales for support, threat, and legitimacy (1 = *no support, low threat, low legitimacy*; 7 = *strong support, high threat, high legitimacy*), and the scale of perceived prototypicality ranges from -6 (*outgroup is fully represented*) to +6 (*ingroup is fully represented*).

included another measure of legitimacy by showing the bar chart used in the scenario for describing the merger pattern. The participants had to evaluate how *fair* (1) or *unfair* (7) they perceived each of the provided dimensions in the chart (see the appendix for the dimensions). The scale was reliable ($\alpha = .88$) and correlated highly with the other legitimacy items, $r(130) = .57, p < .001$. Furthermore, a principal component analysis over all legitimacy items revealed just one factor explaining 62% of the variance. Because the results of preliminary analyses of both measures were essentially the same, we averaged both scales to one score. Subsequently, participants had to indicate which of the two companies was higher in status before the merger (i.e., forced choice). This item served as a manipulation check of our status manipulation. Finally, some demographic questions followed: gender, employment status, age, and length of employment.

Results

Manipulation checks. In this study, 7 participants had to be excluded from the further analyses because 4 of them indicated the low-status company as being higher in status before the merger and the other 3 participants were unemployed. Hence, 129 participants were included in further analyses.

Perceived prototypicality. A 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern) ANOVA on the measure of perceived prototypicality yielded a main effect of status, $F(1, 121) = 185.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = .61$, which was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(3, 121) = 44.73, p < .001, \eta^2 = .53$. The pattern of the interaction reflected the effects we intended to obtain from our manipulation (see Table 2). Participants from the high-status group perceived the strongest

prototypicality in the assimilation condition, followed by the integration-proportionality, the integration-equality, and the transformation conditions. The participants of the low-status group revealed exactly the opposite pattern. Furthermore, both high- and low-status groups perceived the transformation condition as equally representative. This indicates that transformation indeed provides an equal-status perception.

Merger support. A 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern) ANOVA on merger support yielded only the hypothesized interaction, $F(3, 121) = 3.71, p = .014, \eta^2 = .08$. The pattern of the interaction confirmed our hypothesis (see Table 2). The low-status group supported integration-equality and transformation more than integration-proportionality and assimilation. In contrast, the high-status group supported integration-proportionality and assimilation more than the other merger patterns.

Perceived threat and legitimacy. Separate 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern) ANOVAs were conducted. The analysis on perceived threat yielded a main effect of status, $F(1, 121) = 4.07, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$, indicating that members of the low-status group perceived more threat than members of the high-status group. This effect however was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(3, 121) = 2.57, p = .06, \eta^2 = .06$. The pattern of means (see Table 2) was in line with the revised Hypothesis 2. The low-status group members felt more threatened by assimilation and integration-proportionality than by the other conditions. In contrast, the high-status group revealed the opposite pattern.

The analysis on legitimacy yielded a main effect of merger pattern, $F(3, 121) = 26.48, p < .001, \eta^2 = .40$, which was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(3, 121) = 9.67, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$. As in Study 1, the interaction was

accounted for by a significant difference between high- and low-status group members in the integration-proportionality condition, $F(1, 121) = 16.32, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$. Although the differences were also significant in the integration-equality, $F(1, 121) = 7.30, p = .008, \eta^2 = .06$, and in the assimilation patterns, $F(1, 121) = 4.86, p = .029, \eta^2 = .04$, the effects were much smaller when compared to the integration-proportionality condition. In sum, the high- and low-status groups disagreed in their perception of legitimacy mainly in the integration-proportionality condition. Furthermore, the pattern of means for the low-status group maps onto the pattern of means of merger support. In contrast, the members of the high-status group perceived assimilation as lowest in legitimacy, followed by transformation, integration-equality, and integration-proportionality. Overall, these results are in line with our revised Hypothesis 2.

Mediation analysis. To test for mediation, we conducted a 2 (status) $\times$ 4 (merger pattern) ANCOVA on merger support with threat, legitimacy, and the legitimacy by status interaction as covariates (see Hull et al., 1992; Yzerbyt et al., 2004). The analysis yielded significant effects on threat, $F(1, 118) = 20.86, p < .001, \eta^2 = .15$, and legitimacy, $F(1, 118) = 8.13, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$. The status by legitimacy interaction was also significant, $F(1, 118) = 5.13, p = .03, \eta^2 = .04$, and the status by merger pattern interaction was no longer significant, $F(3, 118) = .35, p = .79, \eta^2 = .04$. Thus, the covariates accounted for the effects of merger pattern and premerger status on merger support. However, the significant interaction between status and legitimacy suggests that the mediating role of legitimacy is moderated by premerger status. Simple regression analyses indicated that perceived legitimacy was only related to merger support for members of the low-status group, $\beta = .55, t(63) = 5.25, p < .001$, but not for the members of the high-status group, $\beta = .16, t(62) = 1.24, p = .22$. Again, the difference was significant, $z = 2.57, p = .005$.

Discussion

The results of this study replicated the results of Study 1 and supported our hypotheses with a sample of employees. This study also demonstrated that participants perceived differences in the prototypicality of their premerger group in the merged company depending on the merger pattern. Thus, participants were sensitive to the manipulated merger patterns. Our results also show that the transformation condition was perceived as a condition in which both groups are about equally represented as argued in our hypotheses.

STUDY 3

One weakness of Studies 1 and 2 was that they were quite artificial because they relied on group member-

ships established via perspective taking rather than based on participants' own well-established group affiliations. Therefore, we aimed to replicate our main findings in a natural setting. We chose the context of a prospective merger of the university systems in the federal German states of Berlin and Brandenburg (that differ in status—see pilot study following). Although it is not clear yet whether the federal states are really going to merge or not (i.e., there will be a referendum in 2006), some public institutions of both states have already merged (e.g., garbage collection, radio stations). Hence, the current situation very realistically gives rise to the possibility that the two university systems are going to merge. We took advantage of this situation and asked students from universities of both federal states how they evaluate possible merger patterns of the university systems. Thus, the participants of the study were natural group members who were confronted with the realistic possibility of a merger and who reflected about one of several possible merger patterns. Like in the previous studies, we manipulated the type of merger pattern as between-subjects variable. However, based on the results of the previous studies, we decided to reduce our experimental design. In both studies, the transformation pattern and the integration-equality pattern yielded very similar results. Therefore, we dropped the transformation pattern for the purpose of this study.

Method

Pilot study. In an online pilot study, we asked 26 university students from both federal states (i.e., 13 from each federal state) which federal state they think has generally higher status. Students from both states agreed that Berlin is higher in status, $t(24) = 4.58, p < .001$. Furthermore, they also agreed that Berlin is higher in status compared to Brandenburg on more specific dimensions such as politics, business, and university education. Hence, students from Berlin universities can be generally seen as belonging to a higher status group than students from universities in Brandenburg.

Participants. In this study, 205 people took part. However, as the study was conducted on the Internet, about half of the people who took part did not represent our relevant target groups (namely, university students from Brandenburg and Berlin). Only 97 students from the relevant universities took part in the survey, comprising 58 university students from Berlin and 39 university students from Brandenburg. Ages varied between 20 and 37 years ($M = 24.47, SD = 3.57$); 38 participants were men, 58 were women, and 1 participant did not indicate his or her gender. There were no significant differences in age and the distribution of sex in the samples for the two universities.

Design and procedure. A 2 (status) $\times$ 3 (merger pattern: assimilation, integration-equality, integration proportionality) between-subjects design was used. Because the first factor was quasi-experimental (i.e., based on the enrolled university), all participants were randomly assigned to one of the merger pattern conditions.

The study was conducted via the Internet and advertised on www.w-lab.de (i.e., an Internet portal for psychological studies). In addition, the link to the study was also advertised at universities in Berlin and Brandenburg as being a survey about the planned merger between the university systems of the federal states. As an incentive, participants could take part in a 50 Euro lottery at the end of the study. At the beginning of the study, the participants had to indicate in which federal state they study. They could choose between Berlin, Brandenburg, and other. Because on www.w-lab.de students from all over Germany are asked to take part in studies, more than half of the participants ($n = 108$) of this study were not from our target groups and were therefore not included in our analyses. Nevertheless, all participants took part in the lottery.

The merger patterns were manipulated via written scenarios similar to Studies 1 and 2 but adapted to the context of a merger between universities. The dimensions on which we described the merger pattern were (a) the number of members in the council of the merger university systems, (b) the number of representatives in committees deciding on financial and (c) human resource affairs, and (d) the degree to which the study and examination regulations would be continued from the premerger university systems. The merger pattern information was provided via a written text and graphically via a bar chart. Participants were debriefed at the end of the study.

Dependent measures. If not stated otherwise, all questions employed 7-point rating scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very strong*). The measure of merger support was identical to the one used in the first studies ($\alpha = .73$). Next, an adapted four-item scale of perceived threat was included ("I would be sure that I would keep my study-standards." (negatively worded); "I would be sure that the study-conditions would decrease."; "I would be sure that the quality of teaching becomes worse."; "Probably it is harder to study after the university merger."; $\alpha = .79$). Afterward, perceived legitimacy was measured as in the first studies, $r(95) = .77, p < .001$. Next, a measure of perceived prototypicality within the merged university systems was included. We only included the typicality items as used in Study 2 (theoretical range = -6 to +6; higher values indicate more ingroup representation) because these items yielded the same results as the typicality items in Study 2 and we wanted to shorten our questionnaire

for Internet use. Finally, some demographic information was asked: gender, age, and enrolled university.

Results

Perceived prototypicality. A 2 (status) $\times$ 3 (merger pattern) ANOVA on perceived prototypicality yielded a main effect of status, $F(1, 90) = 170.44, p < .001, \eta^2 = .65$. Students from Berlin perceived their ingroup to be more representative of the merged group ($M = 3.09, SD = 2.07$) compared to students from Brandenburg ($M = -3.00, SD = 2.26$). This effect was qualified by the expected interaction, $F(2, 90) = 3.88, p = .02, \eta^2 = .08$. As intended, the students from Berlin perceived their ingroup to be more representative in the assimilation condition followed by the integration-proportionality and the integration-equality conditions. In contrast, the students from Brandenburg perceived their ingroup to be more representative in the integration-equality condition followed by the integration-proportionality and the assimilation conditions (see Table 3). Hence, our manipulation had effects in the intended direction.

Merger support. A 2 (status) $\times$ 3 (merger pattern) ANOVA on merger support yielded only the hypothesized interaction effect, $F(2, 91) = 3.11, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$. The pattern of the interaction confirmed our main hypothesis (see Table 3). High-status group students (i.e., Berlin) supported assimilation and integration-proportionality more than integration-equality. In contrast, low-status group students yielded the lowest level of support for assimilation, followed by integration-proportionality, and the highest level of support for integration-equality. Integration-proportionality compared to assimilation was this time more supported by the low-status group. However, this pattern was still more supported by the high-status group compared to the low-status group.

Perceived threat and legitimacy. Separate 2 (status) $\times$ 3 (merger pattern) ANOVAs were conducted on the hypothesized mediators. The analysis on threat yielded only a significant interaction, $F(2, 91) = 4.66, p = .01, \eta^2 = .09$. The pattern of means was in line with our hypothesis (see Table 3). The low-status group members felt more threatened by assimilation, followed by integration-proportionality and integration-equality. In contrast, the high-status group members felt most threatened by integration-equality and less threatened by the other two patterns. These findings are similar to those obtained on merger support.

The results for legitimacy replicated the results of Studies 1 and 2. The analysis yielded a main effect of merger pattern, $F(2, 91) = 4.69, p = .01, \eta^2 = .09$, which was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(2, 91) = 4.63, p = .01, \eta^2 = .09$. Again, the interaction effect was

TABLE 3: Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent Variables (Study 3)

<i>Premerger Status</i>	<i>Assimilation</i>		<i>Integration-Proportionality</i>		<i>Integration-Equality</i>	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Perceived prototypicality						
High status	4.06	1.92	2.83	1.97	2.41	2.09
Low status	-3.56	2.65	-3.31	1.95	-2.00	2.32
Support						
High status	2.89	0.96	3.20	1.16	2.62	0.98
Low status	2.00	1.11	2.84	1.46	3.31	1.23
Threat						
High status	4.04	1.44	4.09	1.32	4.79	1.47
Low status	5.39	1.19	4.47	1.63	3.80	0.82
Legitimacy						
High status	2.75	1.87	4.54	1.52	3.11	1.57
Low status	2.50	1.41	3.24	1.83	4.32	1.62

NOTE: Judgments were made on 7-point scales for support, threat, and legitimacy (1 = *no support, low threat, low legitimacy*; 7 = *strong support, high threat, high legitimacy*), and the scale of perceived prototypicality ranges from 6 (*outgroup is fully represented*) to +6 (*ingroup is fully represented*).

accounted for by a large difference between high- and low-status group members in the perceived legitimacy of the integration-proportionality condition, $F(1, 91) = 6.41, p = .01, \eta^2 = .07$. The other conditions did not significantly differ from each other. In sum, the high- and low-status groups disagreed in their perception of legitimacy mainly in the integration-proportionality condition. Furthermore, the pattern of means for the low-status group maps onto the pattern of means for merger support. In contrast, the members of the high-status group perceived integration-proportionality as most legitimate followed by integration-equality and assimilation. Overall, these results are in line with the revised Hypothesis 2.

Mediation analysis. A 2 (status) $\times$ 3 (merger pattern) ANCOVA on merger support with threat, legitimacy, and the legitimacy by status interaction as covariates (see Hull et al., 1992; Yzerbyt et al., 2004) yielded significant effects of the threat, $F(1, 96) = 44.88, p = .001, \eta^2 = .34$, and legitimacy, $F(1, 96) = 22.17, p = .001, \eta^2 = .21$. Again, the status by legitimacy interaction was (marginally) significant, $F(1, 96) = 3.44, p = .07, \eta^2 = .04$. The status by merger pattern interaction was no longer significant, $F(2, 96) = .10, p = .90, \eta^2 > .01$. Thus, the covariates accounted for the effects of merger pattern and status on merger support. The significant interaction between status and legitimacy indicates that the mediating role of legitimacy is qualified by status. Simple regression analyses indicated that perceived legitimacy was again strongly related to merger support for members of the low-status group, $\beta = .80, t(37) = 8.11, p < .001$. There was also a significant correlation within the high-status group, $\beta = .38, t(56) = 3.03, p = .004$. However, this correlation was significantly lower than the one for the low-status group, $z = 3.28, p = .001$. Hence, again we found support for the revised Hypothesis 3.

Discussion

Study 3 was conducted with group members (i.e., students) in a natural intergroup context of a prospective university merger. Although responses to such a setting are likely to be influenced by more variables than the ones considered in the present research, the results of Study 3 replicated the results of Studies 1 and 2 and supported our hypotheses. Again, low- and high-status group members' support for the merger was dependent on the anticipated merger pattern.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The studies presented in this article integrate and extend the intergroup perspective on organizational mergers (Terry, 2001). Based on such a perspective, we predicted that premerger status and merger patterns would influence people's willingness to support a merger. The results of all three studies were quite consistent. Different degrees of artificiality were used in the studies: Starting with a role-play scenario that had to be imagined by students (Study 1) and employees (Study 2), we finally turned to a naturalistic group context and asked "real" group members involved in the prospective merger of two university systems (Study 3).

We found support for the hypothesis that members of both the high- and the low-status premerger organizations differed in their strength of support for different merger patterns. Whereas the members of the high-status group were more in favor of assimilation and integration-proportionality, the members of the low-status group supported the transformation and integration-equality patterns. Hence, the groups aimed for an optimal status position within the merged group (Terry, 2001) and therefore supported the pattern in which they could potentially experience the most sense of continu-

ity (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). Depending on group membership in a high- or low-status organization, members of the organization diverged in their support levels of the merger patterns. This difference in perspective might have important consequences for the development of an us versus them dynamic in the integration phase of a merger (Blake & Mouton, 1985; Buono & Bowditch, 1989). Thus, the results support an intergroup perspective on mergers (Terry, 2001; van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Group membership influenced the support of the merger. We assumed that this would be the case on the basis of our assumption that the evaluations of costs and benefits of the different merger patterns would be influenced by the group membership. This group-specific transformation of motives has been shown in former research (de Cremer & van Vugt, 1999; see also Haslam, 2001). Taking a more individualistic perspective, one could have expected that all individuals would somehow agree as to what the best merger pattern is. More specifically, a merger dominated by a high-status organization should have more benefits for the low-status organization and its members. This is especially the case in Study 3, where students should not be threatened by "job" loss and could realistically expect individual improvements in their study conditions. In contrast, taking an intergroup perspective, we predicted that the decisions to support or not support the merger would be evaluated from the perspective of the person's group membership, specifically in terms of the group-based costs and benefits of the merger. The results of the research supported this perspective, especially the results concerning the perceived threat regarding the merger. This however does not mean that individual cost-benefit considerations play no role in a merger process. Future research should address the issue of how individual-level incentives and group-level motives combine to influence employees' willingness to merge.

The findings support also the social identity model of postmerger identification (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001) because they indicate that group members may want to experience continuity. Our results can extend the model by differentiating between premerger status differences and the actual power relations within the merged company as defined by the merger patterns. Hence, perceived changes in continuity have to be related to previous representations or status relations.

Perceived levels of threat related to group membership mainly explained the variations in support for the different merger patterns. Threat was a strong predictor of merger support for low- and high-status groups. As we have argued, mergers heighten the salience of group membership, which should motivate group members to enhance or maintain their status position. Depending

on the merger pattern, group members were more or less threatened and more or less likely to expect negative consequences regarding their job status and working conditions. Hence, threat was a central mediator between type of merger pattern and merger support. The effects of legitimacy related to merger pattern were in all three studies weaker than the effects of threat. Nevertheless, legitimacy concerns were an independent predictor of merger support. But legitimacy concerns played a stronger mediating role for the low-status group than for the high-status group. We assume that members of the high-status group may perceive a pattern as not legitimate (e.g., assimilation) but at the same time support this pattern because they are striving for the optimal position within the merged organization (Terry, 2001). Similarly, perceiving a pattern as legitimate (e.g., integration-equality) does not imply a support of the pattern as the benefits for the group are low.

High- and low-status groups in general agreed on the legitimacy of the different merger patterns except for the integration-proportional pattern. This pattern revealed the strongest discrepancy between the participants of the high-status and the low-status organization with regard to legitimacy concerns. Members of the high-status organization perceive their dominance within the merged company as deserved or legitimate within this condition. This is in contrast to the assimilation pattern, where the members of the high-status organization perceive the merger pattern as less legitimate compared to the integration-proportionality pattern. Hence, this pattern is probably the one where members of the high-status group feel most comfortable because it serves to maintain their status position and gives them a feeling of legitimacy.

Our results might be also interesting in the light of the research on cognitive representations during a merger process (Gaertner, Bachman, Dovidio, & Banker, 2001). It has been shown that a common ingroup representation is related to more positive evaluations of the premerger outgroup. The assimilation and transformation patterns represent a common ingroup representation, whereas the two integration patterns represent a common ingroup with subgroup differentiation representation. Hence, it might be important to differentiate more kinds of cognitive representations during a merger. This should have implications on the willingness to accept such a cognitive representation. If for instance the low-status group perceives an integration-proportionality pattern, this might result in a rejection of the merger and probably also a devaluation of the other group. Therefore, we think it might be fruitful to look at these patterns and their relations to more abstract cognitive representations in future research.

Practically, our findings may sound quite pessimistic as it seems hard to find a “best” way of merging. Obviously, members of low- and high-status groups disagreed on the best way of merging. However, an alternative and more optimistic view is that by knowing where and under which conditions problems can be expected in the merger support, a better intervention can be instigated. A merger between two organizations needs a human resource management team that supports the employees involved in this process and is aware of the implications of a specific merger pattern.

Although yielding some interesting and novel results, our research was not without its limitations. First, the methodology used was quite similar in all studies, a factor that may explain the consistency of results across studies. Nevertheless, we used different samples and we varied the artificiality to the contexts in an effort to dem-

onstrate the generality of our results. A second caveat relates to the effect sizes found in our studies, which were rather small. However, the effects were consistently present across three studies, which is indicative of the robustness of our findings. Finally, by using scenarios, we manipulated only some variables that therefore stand out far more than other variables present in actual merger situations. Although this effect is somehow reduced in the natural merger context of Study 3, it is still important to acknowledge this fact. Future studies might test the hypotheses by using different methodologies and include other variables related to merger support to further disentangle the challenges of a merger. Such researchers may also want to consider including process measures (e.g., identification, motivation) to further examine the social identity mechanisms we proposed in this article.

APPENDIX

Summary of Manipulations of Merger Patterns

Dimensions	Merger Pattern			
	Assimilation	Integration-Proportionality	Integration-Equality	Transformation
1. Control of operations by the headquarters of . . .	ACME	ACME and to a smaller extent by BOLT	ACME and BOLT	Completely new company headquarters
2. Composition of the top management	Only managers from ACME	From both but majority from ACME	From both organizations equally	New top management
3. Adoption of technical features	From ACME	Mainly from ACME and some from BOLT	From both BOLT and ACME	Nearly all conduct of business renewed
4. Corporate design	From ACME	Mainly from ACME	From both BOLT and ACME	New design
5. Name of merger	ACME	ACME-B	ACME-BOLT	NEW START
6. Logos of merger
ACME:
BOLT:

NOTES

1. This study did not use Schoenbauer's (1967) classification. However, they differentiated between “approaches for integrating personnel policies and systems” (p. 79; we computed average percentages), which can be matched onto the merger patterns. The residual percentage described a pattern in which the acquired culture was assimilated and a pattern in which two similar organizations were consolidated.

2. Mottola, Bachman, Gaertner, and Dovidio (1997) also manipulated premerger membership. Participants were informed that their company was acquiring or acquired. However, the merging companies were described as equal in status. This manipulation may have elicited a consensus between members of both organizations that only the com-

bine and the blend patterns were just ways of conducting a merger of equals.

3. All materials can be received from the first author.

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