# Encountering the Fairtrade Farmer: Solidarity, Stereotypes and the Self-Control Ethos[1]

MATTHEW ADAMS
University of Brighton

JAYNE RAISBOROUGH
University of Brighton

Recent research in social psychology has identified a specific social representation, the 'self-control ethos', which is constituted through neo-liberal virtues of self-management, reliance and discipline. This functions to mark an 'ingroup' through its allegiance to core values and behaviours, from an 'outgroup', forged through a perceived 'lack' or rejection of those values and further, serves as a basis for the denigration of outgroups. However, recent developments in mainstream social psychological theories of stereotype content have developed a model of prejudicial intergroup relations as ambivalent, involving both negative and positive content. In this paper we maintain an emphasis on the self-control ethos but depart from an emphasis upon denigration to focus on a particular outgroup – the fairtrade farmer/producer. We argue that developments in social representations theory and mainstream social psychology can both contribute to a deeper understanding of this particular example of a cultural encounter apparently engendering social solidarity. Recent social psychological models of stereotype content contribute an important emphasis upon ambivalence based on perceived structural relationships in the representations of outgroups. However the self-control ethos allows an understanding of the visual, symbolic and affective work involved in making solidarity with a 'distant' outgroup a possibility. Finally we claim that although representations of fairtrade farmers/producers *ostensibly* become the vehicle for a progressive cultural encounter, the forms of solidarity it encourages require critical scrutiny.

---

[1] Matthew Adams and Jayne Raisborough are joint co-authors.

In this paper we examine social representations of the fairtrade farmer as circulated in fairtrade products, goods and related publicity. The intention is to add support to a perceived shift in mainstream social psychology to recognise more complex relations between in- and outgroups than those of denigration and discrimination. Useful here is a recent development in social representation theory; Joffe and Staerklé's (2007) conceptualisation of the self-control ethos. They argue that stereotype content reflects and reproduces specific and prevailing cardinal values of self-management, self-discipline and autonomy, which underpin neoliberal social and economic discourse in the West. Joffe and Staerklé, in common with their field, focus upon how in- and outgroups are forged in terms of either perceived allegiance or wilful rejection of these values, laying particular emphasis on the denigration of outgroups. However, the fairtrade farmer troubles this emphasis; social representations work to construct the farmer as an outgroup - but one that engenders social solidarity by, we argue, recourse to the values Joffe and Staerklé identify. Although Joffe and Staerklé suggest there is room in the self-control ethos to examine more complex relations between groups other than denigration, this remains an undeveloped aspect of the theory.

The paper starts by providing an outline of the fairtrade phenomenon followed by an account of the predominant social representations of fairtrade farmers. The intention here is to provide a sketch as a basis for theoretical discussion, rather than empirical analysis of representations. Second is an overview of Joffe and Staerklé's conceptualisation of the self-control ethos, and a consideration of how well it applies to the stereotype of the fairtrade farmer. Finally we consider other developments in social psychology which may cast additional light on the fairtrade phenomenon.

**FAIRTRADE**

Fairtrade is one of a number of contemporary ethical consumption initiatives that enable consumers to engage with and contribute to 'green' (ecological and environmental) and 'red' (social injustice) issues through specific shopping choices. The relationship between ethics and consumption has a long and diverse history in the UK alone, including, for example, the philanthropy of Cadbury-Schweppes and Unilever, the Empire Marketing Board and the Co-operative Movement. However the range and scale of current ethical consumption initiatives and products in the UK is unprecedented (Connolly & Shaw, 2006; Low & Davenport, 2007). Fairtrade, once restricted to select products (such as coffee and tea) sold at church functions,

Oxfam or 'alternative' shops, now enjoys a range of over 300 products (including wine, clothes, chocolate) readily available on the high street and in supermarkets. The sale of fairtrade produce has enjoyed remarkable growth in Europe and North America in recent years. Globally, consumer spending on fairtrade certified products reached £1.6bn in 2007 - a 47% increase on the previous year. Market research has seen the percentage of the population able to identify the fairtrade mark in the UK rise from 19% in 2001 to 70% in 2008 (Fairtrade Foundation, 2009a).

Fairtrade promises a fair deal for producers in 'developing' countries. It delivers this promise by entering into a direct long term relationship with producers thereby cutting out any intermediaries; by guaranteeing a 'floor price' for their produce, which allows for a living wage; through training and education to help producers develop their expertise and market-literacy; and by paying a 'social premium' of around 10% for larger scale community projects such as school-building (Nicholls and Opal, 2005). More specifically, fairtrade is a labelling initiative: only products which contain ingredients or materials authorised by the Fairtrade Foundation as fairly traded are allowed to include the fairtrade symbol in product packaging and promotion.[2] The mark stands-in for a guarantee: for a particular product to be permitted to carry the Fairtrade mark, its producers must comply with a number of objectives including those listed above.

The production of goods and the well-being of producers are obviously central to the fairtrade phenomenon. This is apparent at a basic level in the amount of information about specific producers provided by the Fairtrade Foundation and upon the packaging of fairtrade goods themselves.[3] The Fairtrade Foundation website, for example, contains over twenty brief biographical sketches of named 'farmers/workers' - general managers of limited companies, individual farmers with their own land (from a few acres to many hectares) and farm workers - often accompanied by photographs and personal testimony in the form of quotes. The level of detail varies but is much greater than found in the packaging and promotion of actual products. Although the Foundation's account of producers is informative

---

[2] The Fairtrade Foundation is a charitable organization based in the UK. It was established in 1992 by a number of separate organization including Oxfam, CAFOD and Traidcraft. Its primary responsibility is to grant licences to use the fairtrade mark on products for the UK market, but it is also involved in campaigning and marketing for the growth of fairtrade and related social justice issues. It is a member of the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International,which draws together various labelling initiatives and producer organizations across the world (see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/fairtrade_foundation.aspx).

[3] Initially unheralded in other areas of production, this is now a more general marketing phenomenon. Various advertising campaigns in a range of businesses now identify company workers/producers.

~~then,~~ we need to turn to commercial products and their promotion to appreciate the qualitative content of representations of the fairtrade farmer/worker as a key 'moment of discursive/semiotic production' (Goodman, 2004, p.898) in the life of the fairtrade commodity.  It is here where the cultural encounter with the fairtrade farmer occurs, a perfect example of how, the 'unidirectional push of globalisation... introduces in our daily affairs distant others whom we might never physically encounter' (Sammut, this issue, p. 5). With this push comes the potential for novel forms of solidarity, in this case between 'consumer' and 'producer'. Ostensibly the fairtrade phenomenon signifies a dynamic form of solidarity discussed extensively by Tsirogianni and Andreouli, following Gadamer (this issue). He considers solidarities to reflect not preordained collective goods, but the discovery of contingencies that bind us together, a bringing to consciousness of 'temporary and intermittent bonds that already exist' (Tsirogianni & Andreouli, this issue, p. 7)

Rather than embarking on a celebratory account of fairtrade however, these encounters have further social and political dimensions which must also be addressed. Jovchelovitch urges researchers to consider the political dimensions of social representations, arguing that they must consider the extent to which 'new forms… in turn push back on into the parenting knowledge systems… provoking a psychological, social and historical process of transformation in this knowledge' (2008, p. 442).  Here lies the problem posed by and for the fairtrade movement. It encourages new representational practices to accompany a progressive social movement, but struggles to avoid being embedded in existing knowledge systems justifying the status quo.

**REPRESENTING THE FAIRTRADE FARMER**

Once basic Fairtrade Foundation stipulations are met the amount of subsequent detail to be included in the packaging, advertising and promotion of a product carrying the fairtrade mark, if any, is decided by the companies selling and marketing the particular product - though all material must be submitted for approval by the Fairtrade Foundation before permission to use the mark can be granted. The Foundation also possesses a library of electronic images, mainly of producers, available to promoters and campaigners on request. Consequently, there is a great deal of variation in the extent to which fairtrade products utilise and combine image and text to support their ethical credentials; yet it has been suggested that there are common motifs underpinning this variety.  The intention here is to provide a sketch

of some of those common representational themes in fairtrade imagery rather than a full-scale empirical analysis. We consider this sketch as sufficient basis for our theoretical discussion of the importance of visual symbols in the cultural circulation of stereotype content. We draw on our own analysis reported in previous studies (Adams & Raisborough, 2008; 2010) and existing accounts of fairtrade imagery that have emphasised similar themes (Hudson & Hudson, 2003; Lyon 2006; Slater, 2004; Varul, 2008; Wright, 2004). Sources and further examples are cited in relevant footnotes.

Taken together, these studies and our own efforts suggest that the representations of fairtrade producers draw on a shared repertoire of symbols. Farmers are usually named and pictured, alone or in small groups, often in fields, with their crop, at work (generally caught in the act of picking/harvesting), in lush and temperate landscapes. The photographic portraits of fairtrade producers are often in striking close-up, showing lined and weatherworn faces, mostly open and smiling. Clothes are mostly informal and dirty. Images thus depict hard (earth-covered, aged hand-tools) but rewarding (cheerful willingness) outdoor (greenery, fields) labour which is not mechanised. Overwhelmingly the images testify to the farmers' cheerful willingness to work the land and their delight in their fruits of their labour.[4] A common addition is the use of the personal testimony of producers, utilised to convey the material benefits to the producer afforded by the fairtrade premium. For example 'fairtrade has put money into the hands of women to meet our children's needs. We can buy pens and notebooks so they can go to school. We have bought seeds to grow vegetables and improve our family's diet' (Fairtrade Foundation, 2008).[5] Additionally, there is common emphasis on the quality of the produce itself – the benefits for the consumer - often implied to be an outcome of fairness as embodied in the 'labour of love' of the producers.[6]

It is clear that these are not unmediated images of fairtrade farmers but selective mediations. Like all advertising and marketing the 'final' image is the result of intense cultural labour. This process involves a host of actors, certainly including the farmer and the photographer, but orchestrated through cultural intermediaries and their agendas. The result is that some aspects of production are omitted, others emphasised. Mechanisation is central

---

[4] see for example http://www.Fairtrade.org.uk/resources/photo_library/images.aspx and http://www.digitalrailroad.net/simonrawles/Default.aspx).

[5] There are many examples of such testimony in fairtrade promotion and packaging; e.g. Aidan and Maria's story at http://www.growmorethancoffee.co.uk/communities.htm.

[6] See for example 'Larry's Beans': http://www.larrysbeans.com/our-coffee/

to various stages of coffee production, for example, but is largely absent from visual representations. Yet consumer studies analysis has plumped for fairly straightforward claims about producer information and imagery 'shortening' the supply chain by bringing producer and consumer together (Cova, 1997; Raynolds, 2002). Ostensibly this connection is perceived to be a form of solidarity stemming from a shared critique of 'free trade'. Critical work outside of social psychology has questioned this 'shortening' metaphor, focussing on the ambivalences contained in the marketing of fairtrade. Instead there is argued to be a partial 'reveal' of the social relations of production. The 'defetishising' of the fairtrade commodity is combined with its re-embedding in various problematic discourses - colonial, neo-liberal, romantic/nostalgic and consumerist, which consequently 'refetishise' the fairtrade product/producer (Lyon, 2006; Wright, 2004; Slater 2004; Varul, 2008). This work on the selective mediation of outgroups alerts us to the formation of stereotype content in this case. Because social psychology focuses explicitly on stereotype content, we contend that it can contribute further to our understanding of emerging stereotypes and the mediated intergroup relations they serve in the fairtrade phenomenon.

Although a social representations perspective has been applied to an array of social phenomenon in recent times (e.g. Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright, 2009; Joffe, 2003; Morant, 2006; Wood & Finlay, 2008), it has not, to our knowledge, been applied to the increasingly prevalent phenomenon of ethical consumption; a social interaction for which representational dynamics are arguably key. If we define social representations as, amongst other things, 'categories which serve to classify circumstances, phenomena and individuals with whom we deal, theories which permit us to establish facts about them' (Jodelet, cited in Howarth, 2006, p.67), then the fairtrade farmer stereotype is clearly a relevant object of analysis. A key question is what the representational work around the fairtrade producer *achieves* in the cultural encounter between fairtrade producer and consumer – or bluntly stated, what the 'social representations actually do' (Howarth, 2006, p.67). In the social representations approach, the theorisation of the self-control ethos is a recent development which claims to provide a 'common conceptual framework' for analysing stereotype content (Joffe & Staerklé, 2007: 396), so it may help in answering that question.

**THE SELF-CONTROL ETHOS & THE FAIRTRADE FARMER**

Joffe and Staerklé conceptualise the self-control ethos as an organizing principle of contemporary stereotype content.  They consider it to extend existing approaches in social identity theory and the Stereotype Content Model (SCM).  In sum, while both approaches advance our understanding of stereotype content, the former tends to neglect the emotional, social and cultural context in which stereotype content is formed; the latter, while emphasising the structural bases of that content in materialist terms, obscures visceral, symbolic and emotional dimensions. The consequence is the production of a 'sanitized' account of the primary drivers of stereotype content (Joffe & Staerklé, 2007: 401). In contrast, Joffe and Staerklé focus on the social and cultural values underpinning stereotype content and the way these values are symbolised.  The authors identify individualism as a core Western value then examine the function of one of its 'key components', the self-control ethos, in practices of social exclusion. The ethos embraces notions of emotional restraint, self-discipline and self-management. Though valued in most cultures it is in the present Western socio-political climate that self-control acts as a 'master value' (2007, p. 402). As self-control becomes the standard of personhood, the content of our stereotypes and substance of denigration increasingly reverberate with motifs of excess, indulgence and being 'out-of-control' in devalued others.[7]

The authors offer the self-control ethos as a 'sensitizing concept' which 'suggests directions in which one might look' (Joffe & Staerklé, 2007, p. 413), rather than pursuing 'empirical instances' in any detail. As such, there is the need to provide further support for a promising theoretical development, particularly in terms of the 'different configurations and possibilities of the general self-control ethos in different cultural contexts in the West' (Madureira, 2007, p. 428). In what follows our intention is to do just that by considering the application of the ethos to a concrete cultural representation – the fairtrade farmer.  This is achieved by mapping the three aspects Joffe and Staerklé (2007) argue are the most prevalent targets for denigration content - body, mind, and destiny - onto the common features of that representation, as we have described them above. We will then consider if the self-control

---

[7] The idea that these values systematically dominate outgroup representations finds support in the resurgent sociology of class. This work emphasises the association of working-class women in particular with a lack of control in terms of dress, sexuality, appetite and aggression (e.g. Lawler, 2005)

ethos compliments and extends existing accounts of stereotype content as Joffe and Staerklé claim. [8]

The body is a 'neglected' aspect of stereotype content according to Joffe and Staerklé; in terms of control they are interested in how 'social representations concerning body control propagate images of in-control bodies associated with moral rectitude and civility and out-of-control bodies linked to their converse' (2007, p. 404). Bodily control and lack is argued to underpin negative stereotypes of a number of groups and practices from obesity and smoking to gay sexuality (2007, p. 405-6). However, fairtrade imagery confronts us with different 'other' bodies; as noted the bodies of farmers/workers are often made visible in close-up portraiture or farming landscapes where hard work is inscribed upon the body presented: lined faces, worn-out clothes, figures overwhelmingly depicted as 'caught' in the moment of labouring. Here we are made privy to the temporal accumulation of self-control over the body. Accompanying testimonies emphasising hard work and labours of love underscore bodily regulation. What cannot be understated is the sheer *discipline* evoked here: a disciplined body disciplining the land and, significantly, depicting a discipline that 'pays off'. The bountiful harvest and smiling faces speak of a body rewarded for its labours and a communal body benefiting from individual enterprise through improved community relations and infrastructure.

In terms of the aspect 'mind', Joffe and Staerklé argue that 'a competent self is a rational and logical one with mastery over his/her cognitive faculties' (p. 407). The qualities of a derogated outgroup are assumed to invert these virtues of course, a lack of self-control reflected in 'irrational-emotive thinking' (p. 407).[9] In contrast, in social representations of the fairtrade producer, the decision to join the fairtrade scheme is often presented as one of enlightened and autonomous self-interest, often via concise and eloquent testimony.

---

[8] The case we are making here is that the ethos helps make sense of the common features of content of the fairtrade farmer stereotype. From a social representations perspective, this content forms an important resource for subsequent social understandings. It is the consumer that is most likely confronted with this content. However it is important to note that field work with fairtrade producers heavily qualifies any presumption that ideas about fairtrade held by consumers and promoters are shared by producers (Lyon, 2006). This is a vital point worthy of further study in itself, but it is beyond the scope of the current discussion.

[9] We have argued elsewhere that this neatly speaks to ways in which the white, working class, as a specific example, are characterised as holding faulty dispositions and attitudes to work (Adams & Raisborough, 2008).

Testimonies express the value of fairtrade in terms of enhancing the self-control of those testifying, e.g.

> As a Fairtrade farmer, I finally feel competitive - I feel that I have a
> tool in my hand. It has given me knowledge, so that I am more able
> to defend myself and my people. I feel there is a future in front of
> us, because we can stay in our own country and make a living
> growing coffee.  Fairtrade is not charity. Just by going shopping,
> you can make a difference (Gerardo Arias Camacho, coffee
> producer, Costa Rica, cited in Dixon, 2008)

Such narratives indicate a rational critique of free market forces and a considered and favourable appraisal of the remedy. In this regard, both the consumer (ingroup) and producer (outgroup) are invited into the same interpretative frameworks, valuing self-control as part of an enlarged ingroup or 'fusion of horizon' (Gadamer, 1989; Tsirogianni and Andreouli this issue).  Additionally, fairtrade imagery depicts farmers as honest and articulate either with the land (successful growers) and/or in their heartfelt testimonies concisely but powerfully stamped on produce.  Yet certain degrees of emotionality, which might be expected when one considers the consequences should consumers decide *not* to buy fairtade, are displaced by images of determined effort, cheerful flourishing and future-planning (school building and so on).  In sum producers are presented as legitimate bearers of self-control in relation to cognitive faculties, displaying competence, rationality, democratic impulses, and decision-making abilities.

The third value Joffe and Staerklé identify within the self-control ethos is *destiny* – this involves a future-orientation marked by self-reliance and achievement motivation; in particular, they claim that 'productivity and paid labour are deemed the primary means to achieve self-control over destiny' (p. 408).  Indicators of transgression here are considered to be laziness, an inability to plan beyond the short-term, dependency (on state benefits and/or more generally) and lacking in motivation (p. 408-9): notions commonly found in media representations of sections of the white, working class (McDowell, 2006).  It is significant then, that the imagery and text of fairtrade promotion invites the consumers' comprehension of, and advocacy for, the fairtrade farmers' heroic and disciplined mastery of their own futures. Imagery of smiling, weather-worn, hard working farmers, who through their choice

to become fairtrade producers display single-minded dedication to the product, the environment, and the welfare of their families and communities, presents us with a purchasable revalidation of the ethos of self-control via the social representation of a distant ingroup.  In sum, such a presentation, which is consistent across the Fairtrade Foundation's own discourses and the packaging and promotion of particular products, conveys a remarkably close resemblance to Joffe and Staerklé's description of the key elements of self-control over destiny: self-reliance, making one's own living without being dependent on others, entrepreneurialism benefitting self and others and a focus on productivity and paid labour.

The fairtrade farmer of the Southern hemisphere is clearly an outgroup for the Northern consumer. Joffe and Staerklé focus their attention almost exclusively on the ethos as a vehicle for *denigrating* outgroups.  What does stereotype content imbued with positive elements of the 'master value' of modern society achieve in terms of the practicalities of intergroup relations?  There is undoubtedly a need to expand the reach of the self-control ethos beyond 'disgust, repugnance, hatred and shame' (Joffe and Staerklé, 2007, p.413) to at least understand the variety of *affective* conditions to which the ethos applies more fully.

One suggestion for development stems from the idea that empathy towards outgroup members is often based on the prerequisite that they appear to share the same moral code as the ingroup (Clark, 1997; Pizarro, 2000; Williams, 2008). It follows that the representation of the fairtrade farmer as sharing an investment in the self-control ethos is the basis for empathy. Empathy is a necessary foundation for the expression of solidarity from the consumer towards the producer in the form of making a purchase. The pervasiveness of the ethos additionally provides a way through the thorny ground of acknowledging poverty as a consequence of 'bad luck' (the global market place), and at the same time affirming the dominance of individualism and the construction of agency and choice (to be a fairtrade producer) usually associated with the Western view of the consumer (Arnould, 2007, p. 100). Whilst the cause of poverty is located in the social structure, potentially challenging the logic of self-control, it is backgrounded as the basis for alleviating poverty is lodged firmly in the realm of self-control over mind, body and destiny.  Whilst Joffe and Staerklé largely understand the self-control ethos in critical terms as a partial reading of human capabilities used to enforce an unfair status quo, in the case of the fairtrade farmer the outcome could be considered more ambivalent.

The question 'who are the winners and losers in the battleground of social representation' (Howarth, 2006, p. 72) is pertinent here.  Clearly, at one level, fairtrade producers are the 'winners' in our account.  Mainstream accounts of the fairtrade relationship suggest it brings the producer and consumer into more direct contact with each other, generating ties that transcend the 'polyphasia of different worldviews' indicative of globalisation (Sammut, this issue, p. 13).  The logic of the self-control ethos is sceptical of the possibility of a 'direct' relationship of course.  However, in reaching out to the fairtrade producer via the ethos of self-control, obstacles to solidarity – being different and/or undeserving, are apparently overcome. In this issue Tsirogianni and Andreouli analyse Greek and British citizen's talk about immigration. Here they discover a common struggle to discover 'fused horizons' or 'possible entry points that understanding can be built open' in that talk (this issue, p. 15). Perhaps Joffe and Staerklé's self-control ethos has the potential in making sense of this particular representational configuration then, because it can account for a way of surmounting that struggle, as this particular outgroup are mediated positively to elicit 'temporary and intermittent bonds' of solidarity in individualised, neo-liberal consumer societies (Tsirogianni and Andreouli, this issue, p. 7).

However there is a risk that reading the fairtrade farmer through the self-control ethos alone encourages a straightforward celebratory account of fairtrade representational work as 'connecting' producer and consumer, such as is found in consumer research (Cova, 1997). The mixing of positive and negative representational dynamics requires further attention than they have warranted in the conceptualisation of the self-control ethos to date. To that end, we now turn to developments in the mainstream social psychology of prejudice.

## CONCEPTUALISING AMBIVALENCE: DEVELOPMENTS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Emergent work in the social psychology of intergroup relations tells us that the affective terrain of stereotype content is *not* exclusively occupied by the tendency to denigrate.  In developing this insight, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) in particular has invigorated the social psychological study of stereotype content, prejudice and discrimination (Fiske *et al*., 2007; Lee & Fiske, 2006). Amy Cuddy, Susan Fiske, Peter Glick and their colleagues claim to have established three systematic principles of stereotype content: that there are two universal dimensions of stereotype content: competence and warmth; that stereotypes

directed at outgroups are often ambivalent in terms of those dimensions, often combining negative valuations on one dimension with more positive appraisals on another; and finally that social structure underpins a functional relationship between dimensions of stereotype content and any subsequent variations in ambivalence (Cuddy *et al*., 2009).

In other words, the possible combinations of stereotype dimensions are varied but also systematic. High warmth is often combined with low competence (paternalistic stereotypes) in stereotypical representations of outgroups which are not perceived to be a threat to the status or well-being of the in-group (e.g. older people, housewives). Low warmth and high competence (envious stereotypes) are reserved for those managing to compete for resources, but considered to hold ill-intentions towards one's ingroup, reference group or related ideals. Low warmth and low competence combinations explain established forms of prejudice towards roundly derogated out-groups, whereas high warmth and competence marks perceptions of one's ingroup (for a full discussion see Fiske *et al*., 2002).[10]

The contemporary study of sexist stereotypes covers similar terrain in distinguishing between hostile and benevolent dimensions (e.g. Good & Sanchez, 2009; Viki & Abrams, 2003). Glick and Fiske (2001) define hostile sexism as that directed at women who are perceived as a threat to forms of social control and order (e.g. 'career women'), and benevolent sexism as preserved for women who live out conventional gender roles (e.g. 'housewives') . The distinction rests between those perceived as *resisting* their 'place' and those perceived as *conforming* to it – the conforming group referred to as 'traditional women'. The phenomenon of benevolent sexism alerts us to the claim that positive regard for outgroups is possible whilst still retaining prejudicial relations; encouraging a view of stereotype content as involving more than denigration alone.

The principles of the SCM have been empirically verified in the US (e.g. Fiske *et al*., 2002), and in terms of outgroup derogation cross-culturally (Cuddy *et al*., 2009). The approach offers a significant advance in the study of systematic stereotype content, as Joffe and Staerklé acknowledge. It promotes an avowedly multidimensional and multivalent approach, allowing for a significant degree of ambivalence in the representation of specific others - perceptions of proficient competence or warmth may co-exist with perceptions of deficiency in the other quality. As a framework that cuts across the representation of out-

---

10 Although confirming to the pancultural utilisation of systematic out-group dimensions, the cross-cultural validity of *in-group* favouritism along the competence/warmth dimension has now been questioned (Cuddy *et al*. 2009). It appears that unlike 'individualist' cultures, in more 'collectivist' cultures, in-groups and reference groups are not necessarily rated high in competence and warmth.

groups the SCM undoubtedly has explanatory reach, making important steps away from the assumption that stereotypes are uniformly negative with built-in flexibility to account for different combinations in specific instances of stereotyping.

Even in terms of the preliminary outline of the representational content of the fairtrade promotional literature offered above, it can be hypothetically positioned on the axes of the stereotype content model.   The fairtrade farmer is clearly *not* rejected outright as cold and incompetent. Neither are they perceived as high in warmth or competence, when the latter is narrowly understood as based on judgements about an outgroups ability to compete for resources; such a combination is usually reserved for 'in-groups and mainstream social groups' which fairtrade producers do not represent (Cuddy *et al*, 2009, p. 5).  The first of two alternatives is to be judged as high in competence but low in warmth. The structural hypothesis predicts that this 'envious' prejudice is reserved for outgroups viewed as a competitive threat (so competent).  But as an outgroup they are deemed untrustworthy, thus justifying the ingroup's position in the status quo (Cuddy *et al*., 2009; Fiske *et al*., 2002). This does not seem to fit depictions of fairtrade farmers, who tend to be represented in glowing humanistic terms, as caring, community-orientated, smiling, grateful, and morally upstanding, reflecting, as they do, key tenets of the self-control ethos. The 'pitying' or paternalistic prejudice of high warmth but low competence seems the likeliest fit. Warmth and niceness is accentuated relative to this group's lack of competition with the consumer ingroup.  Low competence is ascribed as an outcome of a perceived lack of status and power.

However, this does not tell the whole story of the social representation of fairtrade farmers. Despite the SCM's claim to universal principles, the low competence/high warmth combination is not necessarily accepted in a functional stitching of intergroup relations into the fabric of the status quo. A lack of status and power is acknowledged in the visual representation of the fairtrade farmer, but low competence and a just-world hypothesis does not automatically follow. There is arguably a disjuncture precisely *because* of the power of the self-control ethos.  Rather than relying on a 'just-world' hypothesis to legitimate the consumer's (in-group) status in relation to the out-group (Cuddy *et al*., 2009) the fairtrade relation conveys the *unjustness* of free trade and the developing world producer's status.  The premise for consumer-producer solidarity is exactly that the producer is warm and, *despite* being low-status and powerless, highly competent. The ethos defines the parameters of competency here, the 'standard against which people are assessed and assess themselves' (Joffe & Staerklé, 2007, p. 402). This unties some of the neat functionality of the model.

There is clearly some slippage between appraisals of outgroups based on materialistic criteria and the stereotype content that supposedly follows.

## FAIRTRADE AND THE LIMITS OF SOLIDARITY

Although the self-control ethos suggests that there is more complexity involved in the social and cultural dimensions of this particular stereotype, the SCM's emphasis on the structural inequalities behind stereotype content remains imperative. The consequences of the self-control ethos, we will argue, amount to a 'circumscribed competency' in representing the fairtrade farmer. The implications of this are potentially far-reaching. The modus operandi of fairtrade is that it is a corrective of free trade. However, in the representational work of fairtrade, structural ignominies between groups are *not* challenged and subsequently overcome but recalibrated through circumscribed competency. Consequently we could argue that the utilisation of the self-control ethos in this representation reinforces the structurally unequal status quo of free trade. To explain how it does so we must briefly turn to emerging critical accounts of the fairtrade phenomenon outside of social psychology.

Firstly, representational commonality in terms of the shared value of self-control is flanked by the maintenance of inscribed differences. In fairtrade promotional imagery the construction of an outgroup rooted in the presentation of difference is discernable. Fairtrade is not exempt from the fact that 'different representations speak to different interests and so silence, or at least muffle, others' (Howarth, 2006, p.79). In representing the fairtrade producer, the complex time-space dynamics and networks involved in, for example global coffee production-consumption are flattened into one setting, universalising the character and location of the distant other. The introduction of common representational props - the naturalised backdrop, absence of mechanisation, abundant crops, clear skies – might actually anchor a western consumer's colonial fantasy about the exotic, natural, traditional and simple 'other' (Lyon, 2006; Varul, 2008; Wright, 2004). The fairtrade consumer is encouraged to construct its role as benevolent saviour, reprising 'an imperialist legacy whereby the (active) minority world is constructed as coming to the rescue of the (passive) majority world' (Wright, 2004, p.669).[11] Regardless of the extent to which the self-control ethos creates points of ingoup-outgroup commonality, such imagery necessarily relies on the construction of difference for its appeal.

---

[11] See Ramamurthy (2003) for a similar discussion of British advertising during the colonial period.

A second consequence of appeals to the consumer via fair-trade producer representations is a simplification and individualisation of producer-consumer-relations. Tapping into an outgroup's ability for self-control in fairtrade imagery privileges individual effort over structural injustice.   In this regard the fairtrade farmer *has* to be re-presented in normative ways in order for the pleasures of 'right' consumption to operate.  Throughout fairtrade representations the notion of 'fair' invokes not 'handouts' (which may rely on very different mediations) but a sense of a deserving 'underdog' doing the best they can, and needing encouragement in their enterprise.  That this encouragement can be given through consumer choice (selecting a certain brand of coffee over another) locates the response in a specific theatre of action (consumption) both familiar and comfortable to Western consumers. The problem with this particular framing of the inequities of global trade is that consumption escapes critical scrutiny; in fact it is reified as the solution, paradoxically, to what many see as the problems of consumption (Goodman, 2004). Fairtrade encourages consumption as a solution to profoundly unequal social relations, symptomatic of which is the western consumers' resourced propensity to consume, and the exclusion of poor producers in 'developing' countries from such opportunities.  A consequence is the mystification of neo-liberal power relations and the marginalisation of anti-consumption arguments and movements (e.g. Klein, 2000).  Despite fairtrade's 'reveal' of the relations of production, key structural elements remain hidden, obscuring the link between the core and periphery (Hudson & Hudson, 2003). If 'ethical' activity is individualised by the interpellation of individual consumers into fairtrade campaigning, 'flattening power relations by presenting responsibility as falling equally on individualised actors' (Barnett *et al*., 2005, p.42), and 'elevating consumer politics over citizenship' (Lyon, 2006, p.461), then the fairtrade 'brand' may be a reflection of broader processes of individualization and commodification which the self-control ethos reflects.

Despite their diverse subject-matter, the varying conceptualisations of solidarity in this issue indicate some of the complexities and contradictions of fairtrade's version of solidarity-at-a-distance mobilised via the representational economy of consumer capitalist relations. Tsirogianni and Andreouli's conceptualisation, after Gadamer, of solidarity as a 'fusion of horizons' amounts to a heightened consciousness of the 'various historical, cultural, societal, personal contingencies that bind us together in various ways' (this issue, p. 5). Again whilst both consumers and producers committed to fairtrade could be seen as an example of this endeavour, there are limitations. It only partially reveals the power

symmetries of global capitalism, and in doing so might even reinforce them, as we have discussed. Neither is there any guarantee that consumer behaviour is guided by a heightening of consciousness; in the habitual nature of everyday life, the fair-trade label may be a heuristic for consumers that halts any further probing of consciousness (Adams & Raisborough, 2010).   It is the willingness to go further, to consciously discover and make more of the interconnections between us, that engenders a meaningful 'civic solidarity' or 'cosmopolitan position' (Sammut, this issue; Park, this issue). Park identifies 'the cosmopolitan position' as one in which an actor is willing to act on 'moral emotions' stemming from the acknowledgment of injustice in a transnational global institutional order (this issue, p. 3). The fairtrade purchase superficially meets these criteria, and is acknowledged as doing so (p. 9), but Park's participants offer a fuller articulation of this position, if rarely, which clearly extends beyond piecemeal purchasing commitments; such as in political action and lifestyle changes. As such, the portrayal of the fairtrade farmer via the ethos of self-control could be a mechanism through which global structural inequalities, and the forms of solidarity required to challenge them, remain unaddressed.

**CONCLUSION**

It has been argued that predominant social representations of the fairtrade farmer provide a novel example of the self-control ethos at work. Its novelty lies in the fact that it as an outgroup representation its common motifs appear to be marked by positive dimensions of the ethos.  In Joffe and Staerklé's account, the self-control ethos is described as a device for denigrating out-groups, particularly those of lower status.  Attention was consequently turned to the Stereotype Content Model; as it has been developed to explicitly recognise the mixed nature of many outgroup stereotypes in terms of positive and negative valuations.  The high warmth / low-competence configuration offered some purchase on the particular visual details of the fairtrade farmer stereotype content. Rather than being reserved for denigration alone then, the self-control ethos allows a fleshing out of the 'competency' component of mixed stereotype content, focusing attention on the social and cultural values underpinning stereotype content as Joffe and Staerklé hoped it could.

However, the evident competency ascribed to the fairtrade farmer in stock imagery, described earlier as a reflection of the self-control ethos, problematised the supposedly systematic relationship between warmth and competency in representations of outgroups as a

reflection of social structural divisions.  In this particular example, the attribution of self-control thus challenges the tendency to 'sanitize' stereotype content, again, as Joffe and Staerklé claimed it could. The attribution of socially-valued qualities in stereotype content is perhaps more polyphasic than the Stereotype Content Model suggests (Sammut, this issue, p. 14; Jovchelovitch, 2008).  The functional relationship between dimensions of stereotype content may be stretched by our example, but it does not follow that the claim that social structure underpins mixed content fails. Critical accounts of fairtrade were subsequently drawn upon to establish the ways in which the competency assigned to fairtrade producers is effectively circumscribed. Competency is argued to be embedded in social, cultural and historical discourses which obscure uneven social structural relations. Self-control is affirmed as an ethos shared by this particular outgroup, but against a discursive backdrop in which their competency is circumscribed to obfuscate and perpetuate an unequal social structure. Whilst the self-control ethos extends our understanding of the social and cultural values that circulate in stereotype content, it should not be studied in isolation or as *the* 'master key' of stereotype content (Joffe and Staerklé, 2007).  The range of discourses embedded in the cultural encounter between fairtrade consumer and producer – exoticism, colonialism, nature-mysticism – caution against it. In sum, whilst representations of the fairtrade farmer may reflect an alleviation of some of the consequences of power, they cannot escape what we consider, following Howarth (2006, p.79) to be an important tenet of a social representations perspective: 'that the reproduction of power relations depends on the continuous and creative (ab)use of representations that mystify, naturalize and legitimatize access to power'.

Our discussion suggests a number of directions for future research. More empirical work studying the detail of concrete social representations, including fairtrade, as they circulate in contemporary cultures is essential. The quantitative experiments favoured by adherents of the SCM have their place here (e.g. Cuddy *et al*., 2009), as does the emphasis on participant's utilisation of representations in the qualitative work of social representations researchers (e.g. Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright, 2009).  There is also a need for more analysis of stereotype content across various media forms, particularly visual elements, to confidently discern the detail of that content as a cultural and historical resource (Durante, *et al*., 2010). Finally, we have made a small contribution to an engagement between different social psychological traditions here.  We have established that there is theoretical promise in the conceptualisation of the self-control ethos by applying it to a particular configuration of contemporary stereotype content – the fairtrade farmer.  It is has been interesting to note its

relevance to this particular example of a cultural encounter ostensibly engendering a form of solidarity, reflecting as it does complex processes of mediation, consumerism and activism. That said the structural emphasis, and to a lesser degree the systematic nature of mixed stereotype content prevalent in the Stereotype Content Model has helped illuminate the cultural work of this example. Further dialogue would be of benefit to those interested in both the study of everyday examples of stereotyping, and the potential of mediated solidarity for challenging entrenched power symmetries in conditions of globalised consumer capitalism.

## REFERENCES

Adams. M. & Raisborough, J. (forthcoming). Unpacking the self-control ethos: Cultural representations of the white, working class. *Culture and Psychology*.

Adams, M. & Raisborough, J. (2010). Making a difference: Ethical consumption and the everyday. *British Journal of Sociology, 61*, 256-274.

Adams, M. & Raisborough, J. (2008). What Can Sociology Say About FairTrade? Class, reflexivity and ethical consumption. *Sociology, 42*, 1165-1182.

Arnould, E.J. (2007). Should consumer citizens escape the market? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 611*, 96-111.

Barnett, C., Cloke, P., Clarke, N., & Malpass, A. (2005). Consuming ethics: Articulating the subjects and spaces of ethical consumption. *Antipode*, 37, 23-45.

Clarke, C. (1997). *Misery and company: Sympathy in everyday life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Connolly , J., & Shaw, D. (2006). Identifying fairtrade in consumption choice. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 14*, 353–368.

Cova, B. (1997). Community and consumption. *European Journal of Marketing, 31*, 297-316.

Cuddy, A.J., Fiske, S.T., Kwan, V.S.Y., Glick, P., Demoulin, S., Leyens, J., Harris Bond, M., Croizet, J., Ellemers, N., Sleebos, E., Htun, T.T., Kim, H., Maio, G., Perry, J., Petkova, K., Todorov. V.,Rodrıguez-Bailon, R.,Morales, E., Moya, M.,Palacios, M., VSmith, V., Perez, R., Vala, J., & Ziegler, R. (2009). Stereotype content model across cultures: Towards universal similarities and some differences. *British Journal of Social Psychology ,48,* 1–33

Devine-Wright, H., & Devine-Wright, P. (2009). Social representations of electricity network technologies: Exploring processes of anchoring and objectification through the use of visual research methods. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 48*, 357–373.

Dixon, R. (2008) 'Teach us how to fish – do not just give us the fish' *The Guardian*, 12th March, 2008. Available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/mar/12/ethicalliving.lifeandhealth (last accessed 08/10/10).

Durante, F., Volpato, C., & Fiske, S. T. (2010). Using the stereotype content model to examine group depictions in Fascism: An archival approach. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 40*,465–483

Fairtrade Foundation. (2009a). Facts and figures. Retrieved 28/07/09 from http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/facts_and_figures.aspx

Fairtrade Foundation. (2009b) Campaigners and Supporters Promotional Materials Manual Retrieved 28/07/09 from http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/m/mark_manual_cp.pdf

Fairtrade Foundation. (2009c). Producers. Retrieved 28/07/09 from http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/producers/default.aspx

Fairtrade Foundation. (2008). Fairtrade explained leaflet.  London: Fairtrade Foundation.

Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (2009) Retrieved 28/07/09 from http://www.fairtrade.net/producers.html?&L=

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., &  Glick, P., Universal dimensions of social cognition: warmth and competence *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 11*,77-83

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 878-902.

Glick,P., & Fiske, S.T. (2001). An Ambivalent Alliance*Hostile and Benevolent Sexism as Complementary Justifications for Gender Inequality*. *American Psychologist, 56*, 109-118.

Good, J.J., & Sanchez, D.T.  (2009). Communal Stereotypes prime men's benevolent sexism: Implications for romance and family. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 10*, 88–94

Goodman, M.K. (2004). Reading fairtrade: Political ecological imaginary and the moral economy of fairtrade.  *Political Geography, 23,*  891-915.

Howarth, C. (2006). A social representation is not a quiet thing: Exploring the critical potential of social representations theory. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 45*, 65–86.

Hudson, I., & Hudson, M. (2003). Removing the veil? Commodity fetishism, fairtrade and the environment. *Organization and Environment, 16* , 413-30.

Joffe, H. (2003). Risk: From perception to social representation. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42*, 55–73.

Joffe, H.,& Staerklé, C. (2007). The centrality of the self-control ethos in western aspersions regarding outgroups: A social representational approach to stereotype content. *Culture & Psychology, 13*, 395-418.

Jovchelovitch, S. (2008). The rehabilitation of common sense: Social representations, science and cognitive polyphasia. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 38*, 431- 448

Klein, N. (2000). *No Logo*. London: Flamingo.

Lawler, S. (2005). Disgusted Subjects: The Making of Middle-Class Identities. *The Sociological Review* 3(3), 429–46.

Lee, T.L,. & Fiske, S.T. (2006). Not an outgroup, not yet an ingroup: Immigrants in the Stereotype Content Model. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 30,* 751–768.

Low, W., & Davenport, E. (2007). Mainstreaming fairtrade:  Adoption, assimilation, appropriation. *Journal of Strategic Marketing , 14*, 315-327.

Lyon, S. (2006), Evaluating fair trade consumption: Politics, defetishization and producer participation. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 3* , 452-64.

Madureira, A. F. A. (2007). The self-control ethos as a mechanism of social exclusion in Western Societies. *Culture & Psychology,* 13, 419-430.

McDowell, L. (2006). Reconfigurations of gender and class relations: Class differences, class condescension and the changing place of class relations. *Antipode, 38* , 825-850.

Morant, N. (2006.) Social representations and professional knowledge: The representation of mental illness among mental health practitioners. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 45,* 817–838.

Nicholls, A., & Opal, C. (2005). *Fairtrade: Market-driven ethical consumption*. London: Sage.

Park, E. (2011). Social solidarity in a transnational setting: The cosmopolitan position. *Papers on Social Representations*, *20,* 6.1-6.19.

Pizarro, D (2000). Nothing more than feelings? The role of emotions in moral judgment. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 30*, 355-375.

Ramamurthy, A. (2003). *Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British advertising*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Raynolds, L. (2002). Consumer/producer links in fair trade coffee networks. *Sociologia Ruralis, 42* , 404-24.

Sammut, G. (2011). Civic solidarity: the negotiation of identity in modern societies. *Papers on Social Representations*, 20, 4.1-4.24.

Slater.C. (2004). Marketing the 'rain forest': Raw vanilla fragrance and the ongoing transformation of the jungle. *Cultural Geographies, 11*, 165-180.

Tsirogianni, S. & Andreouli, E. (2011). Beyond social cohesion: The role of 'fusion of horizons' in inter-group solidarities. *Papers on Social Representations*, 20, 5.1-5.25.

Varul, M.Z. (2008). Consuming the campesino: fairtrade marketing between recognition and romantic commodification. *Cultural Studies, 22*, 654-679.

Viki, G.T,. & Abrams, D. (2003). Infra-humanization: Ambivalent sexism and the attribution of primary and secondary emotions to women. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 39*, 492–499

Williams, C.R. (2008). Compassion, suffering and the self: a moral psychology of social justice. *Current Sociology, 56*, 5-24.

Wood, C., & Finlay, W.M.L. (2008). British National Party representations of Muslims in the month after the London bombings: Homogeneity, threat, and the conspiracy tradition. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 47*, 707–726

Wright, C. (2004). Consuming lives, consuming landscapes: interpreting advertisements for CafeDirect coffees. *Journal of International Development, 16*, 665-680.

MATTHEW ADAMS is principal lecturer at the University of Brighton. His research interests tend towards the borderland between psychology and sociology, with a particular focus on subjectivity and identity. His most recent books are *The Reflexive Self* (2008: VDM) and *Self & Social Change* (2007: Sage). He has published articles in *Culture & Psychology*, *Theory & Psychology* and the *British Journal of Sociology*. EMAIL: ma21@bton.ac.uk.


JAYNE RAISBOROUGH is senior lecturer at the University of Brighton. Her main research interests are cosmetic surgery, reality television and serious leisure, informed in particular by feminism and queer theory. Her most recent book is *Lifestyle Media and the Formation of the Self* (2011: Palgrave) and she has published in *Culture & Psychology*, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* and *Sociological Research Online*. EMAIL: J.Raisborough@brighton.ac.uk.