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IDENTITY: FROM SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY TO OPTIMAL DISTINCTIVENESS THEORY

Identity has become the dominant theme in intergroup relations since the late 20th century. In both academic research and public discourse, locally and globally, identity is now the main theme of discussions on collective life, diversity, and multiculturalism. Of course, the term *identity* has been ascribed very different meanings by different authors (a point made by several observers; e.g., Breakwell, 1986, p. 10). My aim here is not to review the range of definitions or the various attempts to clarify differences between terms such as *identity* and *self* (for a related discussion, see Harré, 1984) but only to note the enormous diversity of perspectives on *identity* (see Ashmore & Jussim, 1997; du Gay, Evans, & Redman, 2000; Hoover, 2004; Tesser, Felson, & Suls, 2000). In the present discussion, by *identity* I mean what sort of person a human being believes him- or herself to be. My approach to understanding identity is to focus on the self-reflective tendencies of humans.

Identity is made possible by a theory a person holds that answers the question "What sort of person am I?" The link with groups arises because in almost all cases people respond to the question "What sort of person am I?"

by referring to memberships in groups and providing information such as "I am a liberated female," "I am a Christian," "I am an active member of the football club," "I am a Muslim," "I am a serious student," "I am a patriotic American," "I am a peace-loving Canadian," "I am a conservative Englishman," "I am a White conservative," "I am a Jew," "I am a devoted family member," and so on.

The particular group memberships given priority by individuals in describing themselves depend on distinctiveness in context; the more distinctive a characteristic, the more likely it will be cited. For example, an African American is more likely to give priority to describing him- or herself as an African American if he or she is in a predominantly White school, and a female is more likely to describe herself by first referring to gender if she is in a male-dominated law firm (McGuire & McGuire, 1981).

Identity not only is based on information but also involves emotions, often very strongly experienced ones. For example, membership in a national group (e.g., "I am American") can be associated with patriotism and a strong sense of pride (e.g., "America is the sole superpower"), but it might also be associated with an emotion such as embarrassment (e.g., "What a mess we made at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq").

EXPLAINING THE NEW FOCUS ON IDENTITY

The new focus on identity, reflected in the enormous literature on the self and identity (see the review in Moghaddam, 2005a, chap. 14) is due to a number of factors, three of which are discussed in the sections that follow.

Globalization and Identity

Consider the following two cases:

Case 1
"Ahmed" is a 30-year-old Indian father of three children and is married to one of his relatives who lived in a neighboring village. Ahmed lives in the same village where he was born, surrounded by his extended family and 2,000 other villagers who are mostly familiar to him. Ahmed has rarely left the village for more than a week, and he will probably live on the same plot of land, first acquired by his great grandfather, for the rest of his life.

Case 2
"Krishno" is a 36-year-old father of three. His family is Indian, but he was born in Kenya and lived the early years of his life in Bahrain, where his family set up as traders. When he was a teenager, Krishno moved with his family to Canada and then to the United States, where he went to college. When Krishno was working in New Jersey, he met and mar-

ried "Chandra" and then moved with her to California, where they now live with their children.

In Case 1, Ahmed is surrounded by people who have known him all of his life. He is seldom meeting people who do not know him and his family. He rarely has to explain who he is and where he comes from. The issue of identity is not often raised in his everyday social interactions. In Case 2, however, geographical mobility and life in major urban centers means that Krishno is often meeting people who ask questions about his identity, such as "Where do you come from?" "What kinds of traditions do your people follow?" and "Who do you identify with? Do you think of yourself as American or Indian or something else?"

Globalization and the vast movement of people, goods, and services around the world is leading to greater contact between individuals from groups that had rarely come into contact before (see the readings about globalization and different cultural groups in Spindler & Stockard, 2007). For example, 500 years ago people from India did not have contact with North Americans, but in the 21st century, such contact is now commonplace. Increased intergroup contact is leading to a greater focus on identity, as individuals from different groups present themselves to one another and explain "the kinds of persons they are."

Mass Media and Identity

Just as new questions are raised about identity when people move from place to place and interact with "strangers," particularly outgroup members, such questions are also raised through the influence of the global mass media. Ahmed has lived in the same village all of his life, but now the village has television, bringing images of the consumer life he could enjoy, the many places he could visit, and the countless alternative life narratives he could follow. The mass media presents new possibilities and raises questions for Ahmed: What kind of a person could he (and his children) become, given all the choices out there—choices he never knew existed?

Central to the influence of the mass media is advertising, which changes our ideas about the goods and services we need to live the kind of life we now desire. Ahmed used to walk everywhere, as his ancestors had always done in his village. However, advertising changed his ideas so that he came to see it as essential that he have a bicycle, and now he would like one day to have a motorbike and perhaps even a van. How could a farmer like him live without a van? His ideas changed about the sorts of things that are essential to his identity—just as advertising and "choice" in the West change our ideas about what we need: "An American now enjoys a choice of 50,000 food products, compared with only 100 as many a [sic] centuries ago" (N. Myers & Kent, 2004, p. 123).

Minority Mobilization

Other reasons for the increased salience of identity are efforts at collective mobilization by various minority groups in both Western and non-Western societies, particularly those based on ethnicity. There are sharply differing views as to why ethnicity is proving to be so potent in mobilizing people. On the one hand, ethnicity is seen to be "in our blood" and fixed (Worchel, 1999); on the other hand, ethnicity is viewed as flexible, "a mode of identification, not a categorical identity" (Jowitt, 2001, p. 27). Irrespective of these differences, there is general agreement that the ethnic mobilization often associated with intergroup conflict is global, for example, as reflected by ethnopolitical conflict in different parts of the world (Chirot & Seligman, 2001).

Rather than diminish ethnic allegiances, modernization has, in many cases, led to increased ethnic mobilization. The case of China is particularly instructive because of its rapid economic growth—about 10% per annum in the 1st decade of the 21st century—and rapid urbanization. Advertising in China is now nationwide: "China now has an extensive network of television stations and a proliferation of cable and satellite services, resulting in a TV-based 90% market penetration rate in urban households" (N. Myers & Kent, 2004, p. 114). However, the emergence of one large consumer market in China has not melted away local allegiances; indeed, in an insightful assessment of identity in China, Gladney (2007) concluded the exact opposite: "China is now seeing a resurgence of local nationality and culture, most notably among southerners such as the Cantonese and Hakka" (p. 54).

In Western societies, in addition to various ethnic movements (involving Blacks, Latinos, etc.), since the 1960s there have been collective movements based on reconstructed identities, such as feminine identity and gay male and lesbian identity. The emphasis of these groups has been on their collective rights, and the demand for collective rights has been associated with a reconstruction of collective identity. For example, the feminist movement has involved women defining themselves in new, positive ways (Moghaddam, 2005a, chap. 17). The struggle to reconstruct minority-group identities reflects what seem to be certain basic "identity needs," and these are addressed particularly in *social identity theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986).

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

> There is a powerful trend, to be seen virtually all over the world, aiming at the preservation or the achievement of diversity, of one's own special characteristics and "identity." (Tajfel, 1978a, p. 2)

The emergence and widespread international influence of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; see readings in Postmes & Jetten,

2006; Worchel, Morales, Páez, & Deschamps, 1998) is best understood in the context of two wider movements that gained momentum from the late 1960s. The first is the movement among various groups (e.g., women, ethnic minorities, gay men and lesbians), within and across nations, to reconstruct their identities. This movement highlighted group mobilization and group identities, presenting researchers the challenge of explaining new collective movements. A second movement that influenced social identity theory involved the research effort to achieve nonreductionist explanations of social behavior and societal trends (see readings in Israel & Tajfel, 1972). Intergroup conflict, war, genocide, and other such problems were to be explained by researching contexts and the characteristics of collective life rather than the characteristics of individual personalities.

The roots of social identity theory are found in Tajfel's (e.g., Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963) earlier research, evolving out of the "new look" cognitive approach of the 1950s (G. A. Miller, Galanter, & Pribram, 1960) on the categorization of nonsocial stimuli (discussed in chap. 2, this volume). Tajfel postulated, and research eventually corroborated, that categorization leads to minimization of differences within groups and exaggeration of differences between groups. Given that the "mere" categorization of nonsocial stimuli led to such dramatic consequences, what would be the consequence(s) of the categorization of social stimuli? There was already some research evidence suggesting that even the arbitrary assignment of individuals to social categories (Rabbie & Horwitz, 1969) and the mere awareness of the presence of another group (Sherif, 1966) could lead to ingroup favoritism. However, Tajfel's group was the first to systematically strip away all the usual characteristics of group affiliation (e.g., familiarity, leadership, similarity, common goals) to test the influence of mere social categorization that individuals assigned to a "minimal category."

Tajfel and his research associates developed what became known as the *minimal group paradigm* (see D. M. Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, chap. 4), a laboratory experimental procedure designed to place individuals in groups that have as little significance as possible for those assigned to a group. In the first part of the experiment, participants would carry out a trivial task such as estimating the number of dots flashed on a screen. The participants would then be given feedback telling them that they have been placed in one of two groups—Group X or Group Y—based on their response on the trivial task. Next, the participants were asked to allocate points to the members of Groups X and Y, using a number of matrices designed to identify different trends in point allocation (such as bias in favor of the ingroup or outgroup, maximum joint profit, and maximum differentiation).

The key features of the minimal group paradigm experimental situation are as follows: (a) participants do not know the identities of those in the ingroup or the outgroup; (b) participants have not had, and do not expect to have, contact with the members of the ingroup or the outgroup; (c) partici-

pants will not receive any of the points they allocate; (d) the basis for Groups X and Y is a trivial task, selected to be "minimal"; (e) the basis for social categorization is not linked to the points to be allocated; and (f) a variety of different strategies, including fair and discriminatory options, are available to make allocations. The first laboratory experiments using this procedure established that even social categorization on the basis of a minimal criterion can lead to bias in favor of the ingroup (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971), a finding that has proved robust (D. M. Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, chap. 4).

Early interpretations of findings from the minimal group paradigm assumed a "generic norm" of ethnocentrism (see Tajfel et al., 1971), a trend already highlighted through cross-cultural studies (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). However, by the mid 1970s Tajfel and his colleagues had moved toward a more sophisticated account of intergroup relations, generally, and findings from the minimal group paradigm, specifically. This new account became known as social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and has proved to be enormously successful in stimulating research (R. J. Brown, 2000; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Postmes & Jetten, 2006).

Five Basic Tenets of Social Identity Theory

A major reason for the considerable international influence of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; see readings in Worchel et al., 1998) is that the theory leaves room for cultural variations (Moghaddam, 2006c) but at the same time presents substantial and specific postulates.

Identity Motivation

The starting premise of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) is that individuals are motivated to achieve a positive and distinct identity. On the one hand, this is a universalist claim because it assumes all humans are motivated in this same way. On the other hand, this claim leaves ample room for cultural variations to play a role because the theory does not specify the criteria according to which a positive and distinct identity will be sought.

The minimal group paradigm (Tajfel et al., 1971) provides strong evidence that just about any criterion for social categorization can be used by group members to construct a positive and distinct identity for themselves. How one estimates dots that are flashed on a screen, how one sees ambiguous colors on slides, and what one's preferences are for different abstract paintings are among a wide range of criteria shown to serve as a basis for intergroup bias and differentiation. Indeed, when there is only one criterion for social categorization, a criterion that is considered trivial in a real-world context can have the same influence on intergroup relations as a criterion that is considered important (Moghaddam & Stringer, 1986).

Of course, it is not the objective importance and meaning of criteria for categorization but the cultural meaning that is influential in intergroup relations. Certain criteria become carriers, serving to give meaning to and propagate the significance of intergroup differences (Moghaddam, 2002). Consider, for example, the use of skin color to categorize people: On an objective basis, there is no reason why skin color should be a more important criterion for social categorization than something like height or ear length—and indeed, there is evidence that in some societies height and ear length have served as more important criteria than skin color (see chap. 2, this volume). The plasticity of the basis for social categorization implies that those with the greatest power can manufacture and ascribe meaning to intergroup differences in ways that serve their own interests (see the related discussion on Veblen, 1899/1953, in chap. 2, this volume).

Centrality of Social Identity

Imagine you are attending a job interview and introducing yourself to some potential new colleagues. Typically, they would want to know your name, your training, where you previously worked and lived, and perhaps something about your interests. As you present yourself, you are hoping that your potential new colleagues gain a positive impression of you. For example, when you tell them that as part of your training you took courses in psychology, you hope they will say something like, "That will be very useful in this organization!" (rather than "Oh, what a waste of time!"). When they learn where you went to school, you hope they will say, "That's a very good school" (rather than "That's too bad!").

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) postulates that the need for a positive and distinct identity will lead individuals to want to belong to groups (e.g., a professional group, a school, a sports team; see Baumeister & Leary, 1995, for a review of research on the "need to belong") that enable their members to fulfill their identity needs. The theory gives highest importance to group memberships and defines *social identity* as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978b, p. 63).

Social identity theory allows room for cultural variation in how many groups a person belongs to and how strong the individual's emotional attachments are to these groups. Related to this is the distinction between *monogroup societies*, in which "membership in one group dominates life and fundamentally influences the behavior of all or most individuals in that society in all domains" (Moghaddam, 2006c, p. 160) and *multigroup societies*, in which "the influence of membership in many different groups with diverse characteristics has different levels of influence on the behavior of different individuals" (p. 160). Examples of monogroup societies are Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, where government policies have created a situation in which

religious affiliation is the most important group membership and one that influences all other aspects of individual and collective life. Western countries are closer to being multigroup societies, although there are exceptions. For example, Quebec, Canada, could be argued to be closer to a monogroup society because affiliation as a French or an English Canadian dominates and influences behavior in most domains.

Democracies tend to be multigroup societies, and political parties in democracies face the challenge of attracting support from groups with widely different identities and priorities. This task is made easier if a political party can appeal to a common core set of values that can attract and mobilize a large number of different groups. For example, at the turn of the 21st century the Republican Party of the United States managed to harness the energy and support of many different groups through an appeal to what it termed *core Christian values*. In this sense, national political parties attempt to influence voters to act as if they are in monogroup rather than multigroup societies.

Assessing Social Identity Through Social Comparisons

We come to understand our own situations by comparing ourselves with others: The centrality of social comparisons in our everyday lives has been a theme of research for over half a century (Festinger, 1954). However, it is not just as individuals that we make social comparisons; it is also as group members. The nature of the social comparisons we make are influenced by both our perceptions of our group memberships (see readings in Abrams & Hogg, 1999) and the particular group goals we adopt (D. M. Taylor, Moghaddam, & Bellerose, 1989). For example, when we see ourselves as a member of a disadvantaged group and our goal is to make demands for change and better treatment for our group, then we are inclined to compare ourselves with "better off" groups and to highlight our relative deprivation (D. M. Taylor et al., 1989). We declare, "Look at the members of that other group! They do the same work as us but enjoy higher wages and better working conditions. That's not fair!"

Women and ethnic minorities have used this strategy of making upward social comparisons, particularly since the 1960s. However, notice that in order for this strategy to be effective, others have to agree that the minority group making the upward comparison has the right to do so. For example, today, in the early part of the 21st century, when women sales personnel compare their salaries with those of men doing the same job, this is accepted as legitimate, whereas in the early part of the 20th century, such a comparison would have been seen by most people as unjustifiable. A century ago in Western societies, and even now in many traditional societies, women were not seen to have the right to compare themselves with men.

Because social comparison processes have such a powerful influence in intergroup relations, the ability to influence social comparison targets is of

the highest importance. This ability is part of the enormous advantage enjoyed by those who control resources and the media, as suggested, in particular, by system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), and Marx (1852/1979; Marx & Engels, 1848/1967) and Pareto (1935) before that. To mobilize a minority group, leaders must persuade minority group members that their rights are being violated and it is legitimate for them to compare their situation upward with those who enjoy these rights (Moghaddam, 2004). For example, in 2006 the federally mandated minimum wage in the United States was such that those who worked full time but earned minimum wage were still living below the poverty line. However, the mainstream American media has neglected the tens of millions of people living below the official poverty line and has implicitly treated them as a group outside the range of social comparison.

Availability of Cognitive Alternatives

Group members who are satisfied with their social identity will attempt to preserve the status quo or to improve their situation. Far more interesting, theoretically, are group members who are dissatisfied with their social identity, and the thoughts and actions of this group are the main focus of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). Tajfel and Turner postulated that the strategies that these "dissatisfied" minority group members adopt depend on whether they perceive the present situation to be (a) stable and (b) legitimate.

Once again, social identity theory points to the importance of the normative system dominant in society and to the kinds of system justification ideologies highlighted by more recent theories (Jost & Banaji, 1994). What factors influence the extent to which people see a social system as legitimate and stable? The influence of authority figures is highly important (e.g., as suggested by the research of Milgram, 1974, on obedience to authority; see also Moghaddam, 2005a, chap. 16), as is the role of the media, in shaping norms that regulate everyday lives (Moghaddam, 2005a, chap. 15).

An interesting similarity between the United States and Islamic societies is the high power and influence of religious leaders, compared with lower religious influence in most of Europe, Canada, and Australia. A Marxist interpretation, based on the idea that religion serves as the opium of the people, is that as the largest capitalist nation, the United States "needs" religion to maintain stability by persuading the masses that American society is fair. An alternative interpretation is that the United States was founded by pilgrims escaping religious persecution and has always had a tradition of high religiosity (for alternative interpretations for societal differences in religiosity, see Pippa & Ingelhart, 2005).

Social identity theory leaves room for cultural variations in the factors that influence group members to perceive society to different degrees as stable and legitimate. In some societies religious leaders can influence perceptions,

in other societies scientists and writers have more influence, and it may be that at a global level movie stars and pop musicians are also gaining influence. Alternatively, materialist theories would contend that underlying all these different sources of influence there is a common factor: Those who control resources can mobilize religious, political, and pop-culture movements to influence how legitimate and stable people see the world.

Strategies for Improving Social Identity

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) postulates that minority group members who perceive their social identity to be inadequate have a variety of options for trying to improve their situation, ranging from normative individualistic options to nonnormative collective options. Individualistic strategies include making intragroup comparisons (e.g., ethnic minority members comparing themselves only with other ethnic minorities), giving priority to trying to move up individually to a higher status group (e.g., a woman becoming the first partner at her law firm), and redefining ingroup characteristics as positive (e.g., "Black is beautiful"). Such individualistic strategies are normative, in the sense that they do not alter the intergroup balance of power. Indeed, those individuals who manage to climb up and join an advantaged group tend to be strong supporters of the system (as predicted by the five-stage model discussed in chap. 4, this volume; see also D. M. Taylor & McKirnan, 1984).

In contrast, collective options tend to be nonnormative, in the sense that they do alter the intergroup balance of power. The strategy with the most serious consequences for the sociopolitical system is *direct challenge*, whereby a minority group directly challenges the majority group and attempts to change intergroup power relations. It is in the interests of majority groups to direct minority group members toward individualistic strategies and away from collective strategies. Ideologies that endorse individualism, self-help, and personal responsibility serve such a system justification purpose.

Culture plays a central role in the strategies preferred by minority group members who experience inadequate social identity. For example, in the United States, the American Dream ideology upholds a picture of American society that is open and presents every talented and hard-working person opportunities for success. The American Dream suggests that everyone can make it, and if anyone does not make it, it is because of their own personal inadequacies. In this cultural context, people are taught to give priority to individual responsibility, self-help, and personal effort. There is far less emphasis on getting ahead as a group member.

Collective Identity Model

We should not leave this discussion of social identity without confronting the thorny puzzle of how personal and collective identity evolves in the

developing child, a question that is not addressed by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) but has been tackled in D. M. Taylor's (2002) *collective identity model*. The traditional view is that self-identity and self-esteem are primary, and as the child grows, there later evolve collective identity and collective esteem. Social identity theory seems to accept this traditional view by describing social identity as a component of personal identity. However, D. M. Taylor (2002) turned this picture of the world on its head and argued that collective identity "is rationally and psychologically primary" (p. 41), and that "without a collective identity, the individual has no clearly established template upon which to articulate a personal identity or personal self-esteem" (p. 40). According to D. M. Taylor, a major reason for the poor academic performance and low motivation of minority group students is the lack of healthy collective identity among these groups, resulting in collective demotivation (see D. M. Taylor, 2002, chap. 7). However, if we adopt D. M. Taylor's model, a fundamental challenge remains: How does the infant become aware of collective identity? Are we expected to believe that, for example, an infant born into an ethnic minority family becomes aware of ethnic identity prior to self-identity?

A possible solution is provided through debates concerning *intersubjectivity* (i.e,. how infants come to know other minds) and *interobjectivity* (i.e, how individuals come to know social reality as objectified by their group culture; Moghaddam, 2003). A novel answer to the puzzle of intersubjectivity is that infants come to know other minds through the objectifications of their cultural group (i.e, through interobjectivity). It is not that infants become aware of their ethnic and other group memberships but that they come to know the world through the socially constructed world of their culture, which comes to represent for them objective reality. This includes narratives of how they are different from others, collectively and individually.

DISTINCTIVENESS THEME

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) posits a need for a distinct as well as a positive identity. The idea of a need for distinctiveness has been explored very creatively by research programs led by Gerard Lemaine in France, Marilyn Brewer in the United States, and John Turner in England and Australia. In a study involving children in summer camps, Lemaine, Kastersztein, and Personnaz (1978) created situations in which two groups of children competed in a hut-building contest. The characteristics of the two groups were very similar, except that one group was disadvantaged in the resources it had available to build a hut. The disadvantaged group first "closed their frontiers" to try to prevent the advantaged group from realizing their plan of action; then they set out to differentiate and score points in alternative ways such as creating a garden behind the hut. In another study, stu-

dents wrote job applications, competing against other applicants who either were similar to them or enjoyed advantages, such as being from a more prestigious academic institution, on some criteria relevant to the application. Students competing against advantaged applicants wrote letters in which they differentiated between themselves and their competitors. They did this by highlighting those characteristics, such as experience, that set them apart and by introducing alternative criteria that could not be easily used to evaluate them comparatively.

Identity needs have evolutionary functions (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter), their immediate source being social demands of particular cultural groups. Of course, cultural systems influence the particular ways in which identity needs are manifested. For example, a need for positive social identity may lead a woman to position herself as a "liberated feminist" in Culture A, but the same need may lead a woman to position herself as a "traditional homemaker" in Culture B. Such surface cultural differences, however, should not distract us from the deeper similarity in evolved needs (see the related response of Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005, to Heine, 2005).

Whereas Lemaine explored the behavioral strategies adopted by group members to differentiate between the ingroup and the outgroup to maintain a positive social identity, I now turn to research programs that have focused more on cognitive strategies.

SELF-CATEGORIZATION THEORY, OPTIMAL DISTINCTIVENESS THEORY, AND THE COMMON INGROUP IDENTITY MODEL

> Cognitive representations of the self take the form of self-categorizations, in which the self and certain stimuli are cognitively grouped as identical in contrast to some other group of stimuli. Self-categorizations vary in their level of inclusiveness and are organized hierarchically. (J. C. Turner, Reynolds, Haslam, & Veenstra, 2006, pp. 13–14)

> Social identity is driven by two opposing social motives—the need for inclusion and the need for differentiation." (Brewer & Gaertner, 2004, p. 307)

> The development of a common ingroup identity does not necessarily require each group to forsake its less inclusive group identity completely. (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005, p. 629)

Implicit in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) is a tension between personal identity and social identity of individuals who emphasize their personal characteristics and stand outside of groups as opposed to those who want to "belong" and to be accepted as group members. Of course, this tension is pervasive in much of 21st-century life: Consider, for example, advertising that makes me feel unique and special when I buy Product X at the same time that I know (if I stop to think about it) that

millions of others are also using Product X and are, in this respect, exactly like me. Two research programs that have addressed this personal–group tension emerge out of *self-categorization theory* (J. C. Turner et al., 1987, 2006; Turner & Oakes, 1989; J. C. Turner & Onotaro, 1999) and *optimal distinctiveness theory* (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Gaertner, 2004; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brewer & Roccas, 2001).

Self-categorization theory has its roots in J. C. Turner's (1982) earlier explorations of the personal identity–social identity tension as related to social identity theory developments, but it has evolved to encompass the self and personality more broadly (J. C. Turner et al., 2006). It is proposed that self-categorization is an infinitely malleable, dynamic cognitive strategy through which the self can be categorized in contrast to many different entities—such as other individuals within a group—or as part of an ingroup that stands in contrast with outgroups, which can be as large as "society" or even "humanity." Self-categorization is a continuous process, changing with variations in context and frames of reference (in terms of fluidity, it is somewhat akin to the "psychological field" in Gestalt psychology; Ellis, 1959). However, inherent in self-categorization processes is a tension between personal identity and social identity, of standing apart and merging in, so that "in general the more salient is personal identity the less salient will social identity *tend* to be and *vice versa*" (J. C. Turner et al., 2006, p. 15).

Whereas self-categorization theory highlights the inhibition of certain aspects of personal identity in order for a person to join a group and achieve an adequate social identity, Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory focuses more directly on the cognitive strategies that can be used to balance "standing outside of" and "belonging to" groups. Brewer proposed that both the need for inclusion (i.e., belonging to groups) and the need for distinctiveness (i.e., standing outside of groups as a distinct individual) can be satisfied by a person identifying with the ingroup (to arrive at a sense of inclusion) and making social comparisons between the ingroup and outgroup or outgroups (to arrive at a sense of distinctiveness). Thus, Brewer's theory focuses on the balance achieved through varying the strength of identification with an ingroup and the strength of differentiation between an ingroup and outgroups.

Extensions of the basic optimal distinctiveness theory argument suggest that the balancing of inclusion needs and distinctiveness needs can also be met in other ways. For example, instead of relying on intergroup social comparisons to achieve a sense of differentiation and distinctiveness, an individual could identify with a subgroup within the ingroup and compare the subgroup with other subgroups within the ingroup. Or, the individual could perceive the self as the most representative or the most distinct in the ingroup (the *primus inter pares*, "first among equals" effect; see Hornsey & Jetten, 2004; Pickett & Leonardelli, 2006).

The issue of inclusion versus exclusion is also central to the *common ingroup identity model* (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), which is influenced by a number of intergroup research traditions, including Sherif's (1966) concept of superordinate goals (see chap. 4, this volume) and Tajfel's minimal group studies (Tajfel et al., 1971). This model is also similar to self-categorization theory, in that it places the spotlight on the recategorization of the social world so that under certain conditions group members come to perceive themselves as belonging to subgroups encompassed by a superordinate group identity. For example, if the salience of a common ingroup identity increases (such as "We all support the same national football team"), a superordinate identity will come to dominate social relations without individuals abandoning their less inclusive group memberships (such as those based on ethnicity).

Barlow, Taylor, and Lambert (2000) argued, however, that a focus on subjective identification with a category could be misleading. Their findings demonstrate that in some cases ethnic minority members can feel that they belong to a common or superordinate group (such as "American") more than they feel majority group members view them as belonging. Conversely, in a study that assessed the mutual perceptions of both minority and majority groups in interaction, it was found that minority group members exaggerated the extent to which they were excluded by majority group members (Moghaddam, Taylor, Tchoryk-Pelletier, & Shepanek, 1994). Such intergroup perceptual biases highlight the delicacy and complexity of the task of developing common identities for minority and majority groups, while maintaining inclusion and differentiation during intergroup contact (following R. J. Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

Discussions of identity in the intergroup literature have included explicit proposals that humans have certain basic identity needs. This trend evolved particularly through the influence of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), which emerged out of Europe to become the most influential intergroup theory since the 1970s. Following the tradition established by Tajfel and his associates, discussions of identity in the intergroup literature have focused on social identity.

The two identity needs discussed most extensively in the intergroup literature are the proposed needs for a positive and distinct social identity. Little serious attention has been given to the question of the source of these assumed needs. Are they inherited? Are they in our genes? Are they fixed and unchanging? I argue that rather than being fixed and innate, identity needs are malleable, created by social demands, and best understood in the context of cultural evolution.

What is the evolutionary function of identity? Why should people have evolved to ask, and be concerned, about "what sort of persons" they are? The answer, I argue, is that group members who were more effective at gaining support from other group members had better survival chances. Strategies for

gaining support from others include bullying and force as well as being pleasing and useful to others. If "Jane" is liked and valued by the rest of her group and "Joan" is not, the group is more likely to invest in Jane's future and make sacrifices to protect her rather than Joan. In a group of hunter–gatherers 20,000 years ago, it was first and foremost functional, just as it is today, for group members to be concerned with the question "What sort of person am I?" Far from being esoteric and existentialist, this question is practical and directly relevant to survival (related to this, evolutionary theorists have for some time acknowledged and discussed the functional value of altruism; e.g., Trivers, 1971).

Identity did not just serve individual survival functions, it also affected group survival. Socially created identity needs have served essential behavior-regulation and group-cohesion purposes. Groups that could teach their members to pay closer attention to evaluations and feedback from other group members would be better coordinated and more efficient.

In the contemporary world, children are taught to seek the approval and positive evaluation of others, first, at home (e.g., parents teaching children to be polite) and then in the formal education system, through which are applied enormous resources and formal authority to this task. This is exemplified by school examinations and the aspirations of students for higher grades and degrees (and the subsequent global inflation of grades and degrees; see Moghaddam, 1997, chaps. 3 and 5). By teaching children to aspire to be evaluated in certain ways (e.g., to want to see oneself as a "star" in school), society regulates behavior and achieves higher group cohesion. The preference that the child learns for positive evaluation from other group members, a preference clearly arising from social demands, is then interpreted by psychologists as a so-called need for a positive identity.

Just as the need for positive evaluation is functional, so is the need for distinctiveness. Children learn early in their development that they are not all able to be stars on the same criteria; their chances of achieving positive evaluations improve when they find a "vacant space" and show talent in a way that is novel in the group. Thus, they develop the ability to differentiate to maximize their chances of gaining positive attention and resources.

My analysis of the crucial role of differentiation follows directly from a line of thinking that begins with Darwin (1859/1993) and continues with Durkheim (1893/1964) and Lemaine (1974). Whereas the economist A. Smith (1776/1976) highlighted the role of specialization in increasing production, thinkers following the Darwinian tradition have emphasized the role of specialization in finding or creating vacant spaces toward improving survival chances. Of course, increasing production through specialization can also serve as a mechanism for improving survival chances, but it does not necessarily involve social creativity (this is demonstrated by research, discussed earlier in this chapter, by Lemaine and others; e.g., Lemaine et al., 1978).

IMPLICATIONS OF IDENTITY THEORIES FOR DEMOCRACY

Identity theories have profound implications for democracy, starting with the kind of socialization practices needed to develop psychological citizens capable of sustaining a thriving democratic society. As is clear from attempts to export democracy to countries such as Iraq following the American-led invasion in 2003, a mismatch between psychological citizens and democratic ideals can have disastrous consequences. What kind of a psychological citizen is required to make democracy work? In addressing this question, let us begin by clarifying that although democracy has a few core universal requirements, democracy can work in many different ways, depending on cultural conditions. There is no one ideal standard. For example, there are important differences across Western societies in how democracy works (as discussed earlier in chap. 1, this volume).

Consider when citizens ask, "What kind of a person am I?" To sustain democracy, citizens must answer that they see themselves engaged and identifying with the larger civic society and not just their family or ethnic group or religious group or some other faction of society. In social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) terms, citizens must derive positiveness and distinctiveness in important ways from their membership in the larger society.

Self-categorization theory (J. C. Turner et al., 1987, 2006) and optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Gaertner, 2004) highlight flexibility in the ways in which the self is categorized and how identification takes place with various groups so that the person feels both a sense of belonging to groups and a sense of standing apart as a distinct individual. The challenge of socializing citizens to achieve a healthy balance is monumental and is only achieved to some degree by the major Western societies. For example, consider the fact that in the United States voter turnout steadily declined since the 19th century (Teixeira, 1992), and now, even in the most important elections, only about 50% of the voting-age population turn out to vote. A "high" voter turnout in important U.S. midterm elections, such as the one held in 2006, is about 40%.

The low voter turnout in the United States indicates a weak identification among large sections of the adult U.S. population with the democratic process, and it raises fundamentally important questions about the socialization of psychological citizens in the United States. Should voting be a duty rather than a right in democratic societies? If citizens do not consider it their duty to vote in elections, should they be obligated to vote by law (e.g., as in Australia)? I have discussed this question with Americans who often claim that making voting a duty would be "un-American," but jury participation and many other activities are interpreted as duties in the United States, why not voting? The immediate answer is, "Because Americans do not see themselves as that kind of people." However, such identities can and often do change.

Another intersection between identity theories and democracy concerns identity needs. At first glance, it may seem that the implications of identity theories for democracy are straightforward: People should enjoy equal rights to satisfy common identity needs. Thus, for example, minority group members have an equal right to achieve a positive and distinct identity. Presumably, the state has an obligation to implement policies in areas such as education, through which this democratic goal could be achieved. However, closer scrutiny suggests a more complex set of issues, particularly related to the basis of identity needs.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, identity needs arise through socialization processes. Children can be taught to satisfy identity needs by participating in an infinite variety of different tasks, from sports to academic subjects, to arts, to socializing, and so on. In contemporary societies, these different areas of activity represent very different success probabilities because of the numbers of people who can succeed in each area. For example, the number of professional basketball players in the world is far lower than the number of professional accountants, teachers, and nurses. This means that the probability of a person with average talent and motivation becoming a professional basketball player is far lower than the probability that he or she will become an accountant, teacher, or nurse. Unfortunately, in many cases ethnic minority members are socialized to identify with success stories associated with sports and entertainment rather than with middle-class professions such as nursing and teaching (associated with this are continuing inequalities in higher education; see Niemann & Maruyama, 2005).

The channeling of minority talent into nonacademic domains such as sports has had tremendous impact in all Western societies: In 2006, the champion U.S. National Basketball Association team, the French World Cup final team, and the UK track and field team were dominated by athletes of African descent. One argument is that this success in sports, as well as success in rap music and many other domains of entertainment, can help ethnic minorities achieve higher collective esteem. However, an alternative viewpoint is that such success is very limited because the number of professional athletes and musicians is miniscule.

This channeling of minority talent to sports and entertainment has been coupled with an "every child is a star" movement that has spread in the education system of North America and is now influencing countries in the European Union. By perpetuating the message that every child is a star, many hope that minority children in particular will enjoy higher self- and collective esteem (and thus achieve positive personal and social identity). However, for some time now it has been evident that minorities do not have low self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 1989) and that inflating self-esteem can lead to problematic behavior (see readings in Baumeister, 1999).

Clearly, the every child is a star movement has not resulted in improved academic performance for minorities in schools, where the achievement gap

between ethnic minorities and the White majority is considerable. For example, among eighth graders in U.S. schools, about 70% of African Americans and Latinos (with a combined population of about 83 million) are below even a basic understanding of science and only about 7% have proficient or advanced understanding (Schemo, 2006). Among Whites, about 28% have below-adequate understanding and 38% have proficient or advanced understanding. Such group-based inequalities are not being overcome through positive psychology policies.