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The Importance of Being We: Human Nature and Intergroup Relations

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The author discusses the nature of in-group bias and the social motives that underlie ethnocentric attachment to one's own membership groups. Two common assumptions about in-group bias are challenged: that in-group

Editor's Note

Marilynn B. Brewer received the Award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions. Award winners are invited to deliver an award address at the APA's annual convention. A version of this award address was delivered at the 115th annual meeting, held August 17–20, 2007, in San Francisco, California. Articles based on award addresses are reviewed, but they differ from unsolicited articles in that they are expressions of the winners' reflections on their work and their views of the field.

positivity necessitates out-group derogation and that in-group bias is motivated by self-enhancement. A review of relevant theory and research on intergroup relations provides evidence for 3 alternative principles: (a) in-group attachment and positivity are primary and independent of out-groups, (b) security motives (belonging and distinctiveness) underlie universal in-group favoritism, and (c) attitudes toward out-groups vary as a function of intergroup relationships and associated threats to belonging and distinctiveness.

Keywords: social identity, intergroup relations, in-group bias, ethnocentrism, optimal distinctiveness theory

A differentiation arises between ourselves, the we-group, or in-group, and everybody else, or the others-groups, out-groups. The insiders in a we-group are in a relation of peace, order, law, government, and industry, to each other. Ethnocentrism is the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders. (Sumner, 1906, pp. 12–13)

The fact that individuals value, favor, and conform to their own membership groups (in-groups) over groups to which they do not belong (out-groups) is among the most well-established phenomena in social psychology. According to Sumner's analysis in his classic book *Folkways* (Sumner, 1906), the essential characteristics of an individual's relationship to in-groups are loyalty and preference. Loyalty is represented in adherence to in-group norms and trustworthiness in dealings with fellow in-group members. Preference is represented in differential acceptance of in-group members over members of out-groups and positive evaluation of in-group characteristics that differ from those of out-groups.

Although the concept of *ethnocentrism* was originally coined to refer to allegiance to national or ethnic group identities, the tendency to favor members of one's in-groups over out-groups has been found to extend across all forms of group membership. Groundbreaking experiments conducted by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues in Bristol, England, in the early 1970s (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971) demonstrated that merely categorizing individuals into two arbitrary but distinct social groupings was sufficient to elicit in-group favoritism. In this so-called *minimal group paradigm*, participants chose to allocate higher rewards to members of their own category relative to members of the out-group category, even in the absence of any personal identification of group members, any past history, or any direct benefit to the self.

Since the initial minimal group experiments, hundreds of studies in the laboratory and the field have documented in-group favoritism in myriad forms (Brewer, 1979;

Brewer & Campbell, 1976; Diehl, 1990; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992). In addition to the allocation bias demonstrated by Tajfel, preferential treatment and evaluation of in-groups relative to out-groups has appeared in evaluations of group products (e.g., Gerard & Hoyt, 1974), application of rules of fairness (Ancok & Chertkoff, 1983; Ng, 1984; Platow, McClintock, & Liebrand, 1990), attributions for positive and negative behavior (Hewstone, 1990; Weber, 1994), and willingness to trust and cooperate (Brewer & Kramer, 1986; Miller, Downs, & Prentice, 1998; Wit & Kerr, 2002; Yuki, Maddux, Brewer, & Takemura, 2005). There is considerable evidence that such in-group benefiting is considered normative in its own right (Blanz, Mummeny, & Otten, 1997; Platow, O'Connell, Shave, & Hanning, 1995) and that it is activated automatically when a group identity is salient (Otten & Moskowitz, 2000; Otten & Wentura, 1999; Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, & Tyler, 1990).

Despite years of research on the mechanisms, moderators, and consequences of in-group bias, the nature of in-group favoritism is poorly understood and often misrepresented in the research literature and textbooks on social psychology. In this brief review, I challenge two of the more common assumptions about in-group favoritism and suggest some alternative principles to interpret research in this arena.

Challenging Some Pervasive Assumptions About In-Group Bias

Sumner's (1906) definition of ethnocentrism cited at the beginning of this article contains four separate propositions. The four distinguishable elements can be characterized as follows:

1. Human social groups are organized into discrete in-group/out-group categories (the *social categorization principle*).
2. Individuals value their in-groups positively and maintain positive, cooperative relationships with members of the in-group (the *in-group positivity principle*).
3. In-group positivity is enhanced by social comparison with out-groups in which in-group attributes and outcomes are evaluated as better than or superior to those of out-groups (the *intergroup comparison principle*).
4. Relationships between in-groups and out-groups are characterized by antagonism, conflict, and mutual contempt (the *out-group hostility principle*).

In contrast with Sumner's expectation that these four elements necessarily cohere into a pattern that is universally characteristic of intergroup relations, a review of relevant social psychological research suggests that the components can be distinguished both empirically and con-

ceptually. Yet, common representations of the concept of in-group favoritism treat it as if all four elements were inextricably linked. One consequence is that researchers and textbook authors frequently define in-group bias as positivity toward the in-group *and* negativity or derogation of out-groups.

In-Group Bias Does Not Imply Out-Group Derogation

Sumner (1906) explicitly believed that in-groups emerged from intergroup conflict:

The relation of comradeship and peace in the we-group and that of hostility and war towards others-groups are correlative to each other. The exigencies of war with outsiders are what make peace inside, lest internal discord should weaken the we-group for war. Sentiments are produced to correspond. Loyalty to the in-group, sacrifice for it, hatred and contempt for outsiders, brotherhood within, warlikeness without—all group together, common products of the same situation. (pp. 12–13)

This position is reiterated in more modern accounts of ethnocentrism and intergroup relations from proponents of evolutionary psychology (Alexander, 1979; Kurzban & Leary, 2001). However, the idea that in-group cooperation is born of intergroup conflict is inconsistent with contemporary research on social identity and intergroup relations (Brewer, 1999). Despite widespread belief that in-group positivity and out-group derogation are reciprocally related, empirical research demonstrates little consistent relation between the two. Indeed, results from both laboratory experiments and field studies indicate that variations in in-group positivity and social identification do not systematically correlate with degree of bias or negativity toward out-groups (Brewer, 1979; Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Struch & Schwartz, 1989). For example, in a study of the reciprocal attitudes among 30 ethnic groups in East Africa, Brewer and Campbell (1976) found that almost all of the groups exhibited systematic differential positive evaluation of the in-group over all out-groups on dimensions such as trustworthiness, obedience, friendliness, and honesty. However, the correlation between degree of positive in-group regard and social distance toward out-groups was essentially .00 across the 30 groups.

In-group bias is simply a *relative* positivity toward in-groups vis-à-vis out-groups. Like any differential, the difference between in-group evaluations or treatment and corresponding evaluations of an out-group can be accounted for by enhanced in-group positivity, enhanced out-group negativity, or both. In my review of the early minimal group experiments (Brewer, 1979), I concluded that most minimal group studies that assessed ratings of the in-group and out-group separately found that categorization into groups leads to enhanced in-group ratings in the absence of decreased out-group ratings. Further, the positive in-group

biases exhibited in the allocation of positive resources in the minimal intergroup situation are essentially eliminated when allocation decisions involve the distribution of negative outcomes or costs (e.g., Mummendey et al., 1992), suggesting that individuals are willing to differentially benefit the in-group compared with out-groups but are reluctant to harm out-groups more directly. In a more recent review of developmental studies on intergroup attitudes, Cameron, Alvarez, Ruble, and Fuligni (2001) similarly concluded that children tend to display a positivity bias toward their in-group, but no negativity toward the out-group.

Thus, it is wrong to equate in-group favoritism and out-group hostility, and psychologists need to look for the origins of in-group formation and ethnocentric attachment to in-groups in factors other than intergroup conflict.

Human Sociality and Selection for Group Living

Attachment to groups must be understood within the context of the profoundly social nature of human beings as a species. Group living is part of human evolutionary history, inherited from our primate ancestors but evolved to a level of interdependence beyond that of any other social primate (Brewer & Caporael, 2006; Caporael, 1997). Even a cursory review of the physical endowments of the human species—weak, hairless, extended infancy—makes it clear that we are not suited for survival as lone individuals or even as small family units. Many of the evolved characteristics, such as omnivorousness and tool making, that have permitted humans to adapt to a wide range of physical environments create dependence on collective knowledge and cooperative information sharing. As a consequence, human beings are characterized by *obligatory interdependence* (Caporael & Brewer, 1995).

With coordinated group living as the primary survival strategy of the species, the social group, in effect, provided a buffer between the individual organism and the exigencies of the physical environment. Given the morphology and ecology of evolving hominids, the interface between hominids and their habitat must have been a group process. Matters of coping with the physical habitat—finding food, defense from predation, moving across a landscape—are largely group processes. Over time, if exploiting a habitat is more successful as a collective group process than as an individual process, then not only would more successful groups persist, but so also would individuals better adapted to group living. Thus, researchers would expect that the basic elements of human psychology—cognition, motivation, emotion—would be attuned to the structural requirements of social groups and social coordination.

This perspective on the evolutionary significance of group coordination for human survival assumes that there is no need to require intergroup conflict to account for in-group formation. In fact, in light of both paleoanthropo-

logical and archaeological evidence, it makes little sense to see conflict as the source of in-group formation. There is no reason to believe that early hominids lived under dense population conditions in which bands of people lived in close proximity with competition over local resources. Estimates of the total human population during the Middle Paleolithic are less than 1.5 million (Hassan, 1981). Group living was well established much earlier—2.5 million years ago by human ancestors—and complex sociality evolved early among primate ancestors (Foley, 1996). Researchers have found early evidence of population packing from around 15,000 years ago (Alexander, 1989; Stiner, 2002), too recently to have been relevant to the origins of human sociality. As Alexander (1989) himself admitted, there is no evidence of intergroup conflict in early human evolutionary history. Given the costs of intergroup fighting combined with low population density, flight rather than fight would seem to be the strategy of choice for our distant ancestors.

Opposing Social Motives and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory

Coordinating groups must meet certain structural requirements in order to exist, just as organisms must have certain structural properties in order to be viable. For community-sized groups, these organizational imperatives include mobilization and coordination of individual effort, communication, internal differentiation, optimal group size, and boundary definition. The benefits to individuals of cooperative arrangements cannot be achieved unless prior conditions have been satisfied that make the behavior of other individuals predictable and coordinated. Group survival depends on successful solutions to these problems of internal organization and coordination.

If individual humans cannot survive outside of groups, then the structural requirements for sustaining groups create systematic constraints on individual biological and psychological adaptations. Campbell (1974, 1990) called such constraints *downward causation* across system levels. Downward causation operates whenever structural requirements at higher levels of organization determine or shape some aspects of structure and function at lower levels (a kind of reverse reductionism).

Among the structural requirements of groups are boundedness and constraints on group size. The advantage of extending social interdependence and cooperation to an ever wider circle of conspecifics comes from the ability to exploit resources across an expanded territory and buffer the effects of temporary depletions or scarcities in any one local environment. However, expansion comes at the cost of increased demands on obligatory sharing and regulation of reciprocal cooperation. Both the carrying capacity of physical resources and the capacity for distribution of resources, aid, and information inevitably constrain the po-

tential size of cooperating social networks. Thus, effective social groups cannot be either too small or too large. To function, social collectives must be restricted to some optimal size—sufficiently large and inclusive to realize the advantages of extended cooperation, but sufficiently exclusive to avoid the disadvantages of spreading social interdependence too thin.

On the basis of this analysis of one structural requirement for group survival, I have theorized that the conflicting benefits and costs associated with expanding group size would have shaped social motivational systems at the individual level. A unidirectional drive for inclusion would not have been adaptive without a counteracting drive for differentiation and exclusion. Opposing motives hold each other in check, with the result that human beings are not comfortable either in isolation or in huge collectives. These social motives at the individual level create a propensity for adhering to social groups that are both bounded and distinctive. As a consequence, groups that are optimal in size are those that elicit the greatest levels of member loyalty, conformity, and cooperation and those in which the fit between individual psychology and group structure is ensured.

My theory of optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991) was derived from these speculations about the relationship between optimal group size and human social motives. The theory posits that humans are characterized by two opposing needs that govern the relationship between the self-concept and membership in social groups. The first is a need for assimilation and inclusion, a desire for belonging that motivates immersion in social groups. The second is a need for differentiation from others that operates in opposition to the need for immersion. As group membership becomes more and more inclusive, the need for inclusion is satisfied, but the need for differentiation is activated; conversely, as inclusiveness decreases, the differentiation need is reduced, but the need for assimilation is activated. These competing drives assure that interests at one level are not consistently sacrificed to interests at the other. According to the model, the two opposing motives produce an emergent characteristic—the capacity for social identification with distinctive groups that satisfy both needs simultaneously.

Evidence for competing social motives comes from empirical demonstrations of efforts to achieve or restore group identification when these needs are deprived. Results of experimental studies have shown that activation of the need for assimilation or the need for differentiation increases the importance of distinctive group memberships (Pickett, Silver, & Brewer, 2002), that threat to inclusion enhances self-stereotyping on group-characteristic traits (Brewer & Pickett, 1999; Pickett, Bonner, & Coleman, 2002), and that threat to group distinctiveness motivates overexclusion (Pickett, 1999) and intergroup differentiation (Jetten,

Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993). Further, assignment to distinctive minority group categories engages greater group identification and self-stereotyping than does membership in large, inclusive majority groups (Brewer & Weber, 1994; Leonardelli & Brewer, 2001; Simon & Hamilton, 1994). Thus, there is converging evidence that group attachment is regulated by motives for inclusion and distinctiveness.

In-Group Bias Is Not Necessarily Self-Enhancement

Optimal distinctiveness theory and an evolutionary perspective on the functions of group living also provide a new way of looking at the motives underlying in-group favoritism. In the current literature, the most well-known theory of in-group bias is social identity theory, as articulated by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1975). Social identity is defined as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group . . . together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). Social identity theory represents the convergence of two traditions in the study of intergroup attitudes and behavior—social categorization and social comparison. The theoretical perspective rests on two basic premises:

1. Individuals organize their understanding of the social world on the basis of categorical distinctions that transform continuous variables into discrete classes; categorization has the effect of minimizing perceived differences within categories and accentuating intercategory differences.
2. Because individual persons are themselves members of some social categories and not others, social categorization carries with it implicit in-group/out-group (we–they) distinctions; because of the self-relevance of social categories, the in-group/out-group classification is a superimposed category distinction with affective and emotional significance.

From these basic premises, the theory explains in-group bias in terms of a search for *positive distinctiveness* (Turner, 1975)—value and status advantages for the in-group in comparison with relevant out-groups. Although there is some controversy about the status of the so-called *self-esteem hypothesis* attributed to social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998; Turner & Reynolds, 2001), the implication of the positive distinctiveness concept is that in-group favoritism is driven by personal and collective self-enhancement motives. By contrast, optimal distinctiveness theory gives status and positivity a secondary role and suggests that security motives, rather than self-enhancement, underlie in-group favoritism

(see also Hart, Shaver, & Goldenberg, 2005; Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

This is not to deny that, all else being equal, individuals view their in-groups in the most positive light and attribute positive characteristics to fellow in-group members. In fact, there is ample evidence that once the self has become attached to a social group or category, positive affect and evaluations associated with the self-concept are automatically transferred to the group as a whole (Farnham, Greenwald, & Banaji, 1999; Otten & Moskowitz, 2000; Otten & Wentura, 1999). However, my argument is that differential positivity toward in-groups is a *consequence* of group attachment and social identity, rather than their cause.

As indicated previously, the essential characteristics of ethnocentric attachment to in-groups are loyalty and preference. Both of these characteristics follow from the functions that in-groups serve as bounded communities of mutual cooperation and trust (Brewer, 1999). The adaptive value of groups lies in interactional norms that facilitate reciprocal exchanges within the group (Gil-White, 2001; Henrich et al., 2001.) Psychologically, expectations of cooperation and security promote positive attraction toward other in-group members and motivate adherence to in-group norms of appearance and behavior that assure that one will be recognized as a good or legitimate in-group member. Symbols and behaviors that differentiate the in-group from local out-groups become particularly important here. They reduce the risk that in-group benefits will be inadvertently extended to out-group members and ensure that in-group members will recognize their own entitlement to receive benefits. Assimilation within and differentiation among groups are thus mutually reinforcing, along with ethnocentric preference for in-group interactions and institutions.

A consequence of in-group identification and intergroup boundaries is that individuals modify their social behavior depending on whether they are interacting with in-group or out-group members. In-group behavior is governed by norms and sanctions that reinforce expectations of mutual cooperation and trustworthiness. Trust is supported by implicit understandings that in-group members will monitor the behavior and interactions of other group members, sanctioning deviations from group expectations about appropriate in-group attitudes and behavior. Thus, shared in-group membership may be taken as *prima facie* evidence that other members of the group will live by the codes of conduct that bind them together as a group (Kramer, Brewer, & Hanna, 1996).

Just as there is a realistic basis for ethnocentric trust of in-groups, differences in norms and sanctions applied to in-group behavior compared with behavior in interactions with out-group members provide a realistic basis for out-group distrust and negative stereotypes. At the same time that groups promote trust and cooperation within, they cau-

tion wariness and constraint in intergroup interactions. Thus, even in the absence of overt conflict between groups, the differentiation between in-group and out-group behavior creates a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy in the realm of intergroup perceptions. As LeVine and Campbell (1972) put it, “if most or all groups are, in fact, ethnocentric, then it becomes an ‘accurate’ stereotype to accuse an out-group of some aspect of ethnocentrism [italics added]” (p. 173).

Combined with the accentuation principle that exaggerates perceived differences between social categories, this leads to a set of *universal stereotypes* to characterize in-group/out-group differences. Whereas we are trustworthy, peaceful, moral, loyal, and reliable, they are clannish, exclusive, and potentially treacherous. What is particularly interesting about this pattern of stereotypes is that the same behaviors that are interpreted as reasonable caution on the part of the in-group in dealings with out-group members become interpreted as clannishness and indicators of potential treachery when exhibited by out-group members toward the in-group.

Evidence for this hypothesized universal difference in in-group versus out-group stereotypes was provided by data from our survey of intergroup perceptions in East Africa (Brewer & Campbell, 1976). Respondents in the survey were presented with a lengthy list of character traits (both positive and negative) and asked to indicate which groups were most likely to exhibit each trait. When responses to this trait list were factor analyzed, the first factor that emerged was a bipolar evaluative factor interpretable as trustworthiness versus untrustworthiness. Positive loadings on this factor were associated with traits such as peaceful, obedient, honest, gentle, and friendly. Negative loadings were obtained for traits such as quarrelsome, disobedient, dishonest with others, cruel, and hot tempered. An index of positive regard was constructed by taking the frequency with which a group was mentioned in connection with positive traits on this factor and subtracting the frequency of mentions in connection with the negative traits. Comparing in-group and out-group ratings on this index revealed that the ratings that all 30 groups in the survey gave their own group were more positive than the average rating given to out-groups. Further, 27 of the groups rated the in-group higher than any out-group in the sample (Brewer & Campbell, 1976, p. 79). Although the assignment of negative traits, such as quarrelsome, dishonest, and cruel, varied considerably across out-groups, attributions of positive traits, such as peaceful, honest, and friendly, were almost universally reserved for the in-group.

It is interesting that the results of the East African survey of intergroup perceptions did not reveal a similar level of in-group positivity bias on traits such as smart, wealthy, and progressive. Instead, these achievement and status-related characteristics were assigned to ethnic groups on the basis of objective indices of resources and power in the

postcolonial period. Although group members may prefer to see themselves as competent and smart, comparative evaluations on these traits are constrained by reality. Evidence for so-called *out-group favoritism* (Jost, 2001; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991) is generally limited to findings that members of lower status groups evaluate high-status out-groups more positively than their in-group on *status-relevant* dimensions of evaluation. In effect, they are simply acknowledging objective differences in status, power, or wealth and resources.¹

If, as I argue here, the basis for universal in-group preference is derived from the security and trust associated with in-group exchanges, then it is reasonable that the most reliable dimensions of in-group positivity are those related to trustworthiness, cooperativeness, and honesty. Consistent with this perspective, a set of studies conducted by Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto (2007) implicated morality traits (e.g., honesty, sincerity) as the characteristics most important to positive in-group evaluation. Factor analysis results showed morality to account for more in-group favorability than either competence or sociality, and when asked directly, participants also reported that morality was more important. Further, experimental manipulations of morality versus competence and sociability information showed that only morality affected levels of in-group attachment. Thus, it appears that it is perceptions of trust and reliability that underlie in-group favoritism rather than positivity per se, as would be expected from the self-enhancement explanation.

When In-Group Love Becomes Out-Group Hate

My argument that in-group positivity does not necessarily imply out-group derogation should not be taken to mean that in-group favoritism and out-group hostility do not feed on each other. Indeed, contemporary and historical events provide ample evidence that ethnocentrism can be mobilized to moral aggression and intergroup conflict. The point is simply that in-group attachment may be a necessary but not sufficient cause of intergroup hostility and that it is possible to have in-group loyalty and attachment in the absence of conflict with out-groups. Nonetheless, in-group/out-group differentiation does provide a grounding for intergroup hate, and it behooves psychologists to understand the conditions under which in-group preference can become correlated with out-group hostility.

To justify out-group hate and intergroup conflict, the very existence of the out-group, or its goals and values,

¹ In fact, much of the data cited as evidence of out-group bias may actually reflect a form of in-group bias if members of the underprivileged group systematically underestimate the status difference between groups. Just as higher status group members tend to enhance the intergroup status difference by rating the in-group much higher than the lower status out-group, members of lower status groups tend to minimize the status difference, rating the out-group only slightly higher than the in-group on relevant dimensions (Brewer & Campbell, 1976; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991).

must be seen as a threat to the maintenance and the social identity of the in-group. Thus, understanding the relationship between in-group identification and out-group hostility requires understanding how the interests of the in-group and those of the out-group come to be perceived as in conflict.

At the individual level, optimal distinctiveness theory has implications for when individuals will feel that their in-group identity and the functions it serves are being threatened. If in-groups provide for both secure inclusion and intergroup differentiation, then anything that undermines either of these needs will activate attempts to restore optimality and enhance intergroup distinctions. The effects of threats to in-group distinctiveness on hostility toward the threatening out-group have been well documented (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). However, similar effects can be obtained when individuals' sense of inclusion within the in-group has been threatened (Pickett & Brewer, 2005). When a member of a group is led to believe that he or she is not a typical group member or is not fully accepted as part of the group, the person should experience distress to the extent that the person relies on that particular group for the satisfaction of belongingness, security, or assimilation needs. Peripheral group members not only need to be concerned with being similar to other in-group members, but also need to be concerned that they are not confused with the out-group. This leads to the prediction that marginal in-group members will be most concerned with maintaining intergroup distance and endorsing negativity toward out-groups.

Another approach to conceptualizing how perceptions of in-group/out-group relations may lead to out-group negativity is integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). This model distinguishes four different sources of experienced threat from a specific out-group: *realistic threats* (threats to the existence, power, or material well-being of the in-group or in-group members), *symbolic threats* (threats to the in-group worldview arising from perceived group differences in morals, values, and standards), *intergroup anxiety* (personal fear or discomfort experienced in connection with actual or anticipated interactions with members of the out-group), and *negative stereotypes* (beliefs about out-group characteristics that imply unpleasant or conflictual interactions and negative consequences for the self or the in-group). In a field test of this model, Stephan et al. (2002) found that ratings of realistic threat, symbolic threat, and intergroup anxiety were significant predictors of negative interracial attitudes and that these threat perceptions mediated the effects of other predictor variables, such as in-group identification, intergroup contact, and status differences.

Stephan and Stephan's (2000) taxonomy of intergroup threat delineates the ways in which the very existence of a particular out-group may be perceived as a danger to the

in-group, but it begs the question of how in-group members come to see out-groups in this way. Except under conditions of realistic group conflict (i.e., life-and-death competition for scarce resources or open warfare), the perception that an out-group constitutes a symbolic or reputational threat to the in-group is highly subjective, and researchers still need more explicit theory of how these perceptions arise. I suggest two factors that may promote or exacerbate the perception of out-group threat.

Common Goals

The presence of realistic competition over scarce resources or other group goals is clearly a strong basis for intergroup conflict and hostility. By contrast, the presence of superordinate goals or common threat is widely believed to provide the conditions necessary for intergroup cooperation and reduction of conflict (e.g., Sherif, 1966). This belief is an extrapolation of the general finding that *intragroup* solidarity is increased in the face of shared threat or common challenge.

It may be true that loosely knit in-groups become more cohesive and less subject to internal factioning when they can be rallied to the demands of achieving a common goal. The dynamics of interdependence are quite different, however, in the case of highly differentiated social groups. Among members of the same in-group, engaging the sense of trust necessary for cooperative collective action is essentially nonproblematic. In an intergroup context, however, perceived interdependence and the need for cooperative interaction make salient the absence of mutual trust. Without the mechanism of trust based on common identity, the risk of exploited cooperation looms large, and distrust dominates over trust in the decision structure. It is for this reason that I have argued elsewhere (Brewer, 2000) that the *anticipation* of positive interdependence with an out-group, brought on by perceptions of common goals or common threat, actually promotes intergroup conflict and hostility. When negative evaluations of the out-group, such as contempt, are also already present, common threat in particular may promote scapegoating and blame rather than mutual cooperation.

Perceived positive interdependence with the out-group also threatens intergroup differentiation (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Jetten et al., 2004). To the extent that feelings of secure inclusion, in-group loyalty, and optimal identity are dependent on the clarity of in-group boundaries and intergroup distinctions, shared experiences and cooperation with the out-group threaten the basis for social identification. Particularly for individuals who are exclusively vested in a single group identity, the threat of lost distinctiveness may override the pursuit of superordinate goals and lead to resistance to cooperation (collaboration) even at the cost of in-group self-interest.

Power Politics

Moral superiority, distrust of out-groups, and social comparison are all processes that emerge from in-group maintenance and favoritism and can lead to hostility and conflict between groups even in the absence of realistic conflict over material resources or power. When groups are political entities, however, these processes may be exacerbated by group leaders' deliberate manipulations to mobilize collective action to secure or maintain political power. Social category differentiation provides the fault lines in any social system that can be exploited for political purposes. When trust is based in the in-group, it is easy to fear control by outsiders; perceived common threat from out-groups increases in-group cohesion and loyalty; appeals to in-group interests have greater legitimacy than appeals to personal self-interest. Thus, politicization—an important mechanism of social change—can be added to the factors that may contribute to a correlation between in-group love and out-group hate.

Final Thoughts

Human psychology was not forged under conditions of global interdependence. Security and survival depended on inclusion in stable, clearly differentiated social groups. As a consequence of our evolutionary history, our sense of personal security and certainty are maximized in the context of shared in-group membership and clear in-group/out-group distinctions. Understanding the origins and nature of in-group favoritism, and differentiating in-group attachment from out-group hostility, may be critical for harnessing the best of human sociality while avoiding the horrific consequences of intergroup conflict.

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Jean M. Mandler

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“For her seminal work on major problems, including space (spatial representation and cognition), time (story and event representation), and categories of reason (conceptualization). Jean M. Mandler illuminated the common structure underlying the different surface features of these areas. Throughout her career, she has maintained a comparative orientation, studying and learning from nonhuman animals, adults of our species, and the most challenging organisms of all, human infants and children. To her, each population yielded novel insights that, through her unique perspective and exceptional analysis, she fashioned into a compelling account of nothing less than the origins of knowledge and the foundations of the human mind.”

Biography

Jean M. Mandler (née Matter) was born in 1929 in Oak Park, Illinois. Her parents were traditional in their views but intellectually inclined, and they chose this Chicago suburb in part because of its excellent school system, espe-