Chapter 2

SOCIAL IDENTITY IN INDUSTRIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY: CONCEPTS, CONTROVERSIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

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It is now 25 years since the publication of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) seminal statement on social identity theory and 15 years since Ashforth and Mael (1989) published their classic *Academy of Management Review* article pointing to the potential value of using this theory to enhance researchers' understanding of organizational life. Whatever else the latter article may have achieved, it is clear that it was highly prophetic, as, over the intervening period, industrial and organizational psychologists' interest in social identity and related concepts has increased at a phenomenal rate. On top of nearly 300 citations of the Ashforth and Mael paper, this is indicated, among other developments, by the publication of several key books and journal special issues devoted to research in this area (e.g., Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Haslam, 2001, 2004; Haslam, van Knippenberg, Platow, & Ellemers, 2003; Hogg & Terry, 2001; Tyler & Blader, 2000; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2001) and the exponential rise in articles that make reference to the terms 'social' and/or 'organizational' identity (for details see Haslam, 2004, p. xxv; Haslam, Postmes, & Ellemers, 2003). As the range of journals listed in Table 2.1 indicates, it is also apparent that this research has had a broad as well as a deep impact on the field.

These trends indicate that a thoroughgoing review of the status of social identity in industrial and organizational fields is very timely (see also

Table 2.1   Outlets for articles on 'social identity' and 'organizations' (1990–2004).⋆

Organizational psychology journals	Frequency	%
Academy of Management Journal	8	
Academy of Management Review	7	
Administrative Science Quarterly	8	
Applied Psychology: An International Review	3	
British Journal of Management	2	
Group and Organization Management	2	
Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences	2	
Human Relations	13	
International Journal of Human Resource Management	6	
Journal of Applied Psychology	4	
Journal of Management	2	
Journal of Management Studies	2	
Journal of Marketing	2	
Journal of Organizational Behavior	7	
Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	5	
Organization Science	5	
Research in Organizational Behavior	9	
Zeitschrift für Arbeits und Organizationspsychologie	3	
Other (N = 1 per outlet)	32	
Total	*122*	*73*

Social/General psychology journals	Frequency	%
British Journal of Social Psychology	4	
European Journal of Social Psychology	1	
Group Processes & Intergroup Relations	4	
Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	2	
Journal of Applied Social Psychology	4	
Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin	4	
Personality and Social Psychology Review	3	
Other (N = 1 per outlet)	23	
Total	*45*	*27*

⋆ These publications came up in an electronic search, carried out with the following criteria: In ISI Web of Science (SCI-Expanded and SSCI) a full search was carried out for literature published between 1990 and 2004 (all languages) with the search terms 'social identi⋆ and organization⋆' and with 'social identi⋆ and organisation⋆'. This yielded 213 hits. According to the same specifications a search was also carried out with Webspirs (Psychlit), which yielded 179 hits. After excluding duplications, obviously non-relevant publications, unpublished dissertations, and book chapters, this resulted in 167 unique hits.

Hodgkinson, 2003). Not least, this is because commentators have recently identified concerns and confusions that lead them to call into question the capacity for social identity work to contribute to theoretical and practical progress (e.g., see Cornelissen, 2002a; Jost & Elsbach, 2001; Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002). Although a recent contribution in this series by

van Dick (2004) also examined how identification in work contexts can be understood from a social identity perspective, this previous contribution focused on examining the relevance of the concept of identity for the analysis of organizational behavior, with a particular emphasis on organizational mergers and group productivity (see also Cartwright, 2005). The goal of the present chapter is different, as we aim to address the social identity approach to organizational behavior in a broader sense. Thus, our present aim is to review developments in this area and, in the process, both (a) engage with and resolve controversies that have arisen in the field and (b) identify those research avenues that have been associated with most progress and which hold out the most promise for future advance.

A key conclusion that emerges from this review is that, while the social identity perspective has delivered—and should continue to deliver—a considerable return on the investment of research energy, the dividends of this activity are contingent on close attention being paid to the core theoretical concepts which lie at its heart. This is because, as social identity work develops and becomes ever more influential, there is a danger these ideas will be diluted and simplified and that, as a result, the approach will lose its explanatory and practical power (Ellemers, Haslam, Platow, & van Knippenberg, 2003; Turner, 1999). In order to offset this possibility, a core goal of this chapter is to (re)connect the field with underlying theory and to demonstrate that it is through a detailed elaboration of those forms of understanding first signalled by Tajfel and Turner (1979) that the best prospects for the future lie.

SOCIAL IDENTITY CONCEPTS

Social Identity and the Search for Positive Distinctiveness

Within social psychology the concept of social identity grew from an awareness of the reality of the group and of its distinctive contribution to social cognition and behavior. A core idea here was that groups are not only external features of the world, they are also *internalized* so that they contribute to a person's *sense of self*.

The specific empirical catalyst for this insight was a series of (now famous) studies conducted by Tajfel and his colleagues in the early 1970s (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). These were designed to identify the minimal conditions that would lead members of one group to discriminate in favor of the *ingroup* to which they belonged and against another *outgroup*. For this purpose, participants were assigned to groups that were intended to be as empty and meaningless as possible—the goal being to add meaning to the situation in order to discover at what point people would start to discriminate against the outgroup. Participants were led to believe that assignment to groups was made on the basis of trivial

Points for member of

Klee group:	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Kandinsky group:	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25

MD   F   MIP
MJP

Figure 2.1 A typical matrix from a minimal group study.
Based on Tajfel (ed.) (1978), *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, London: Academic Press. *Note*: Participants decide how many points to award to the ingroup and outgroup member by selecting one pair of numbers. In this example, a participant in the Klee group would make a choice towards the left-hand end of the matrix to achieve the maximum gain of the ingroup member relative to that of the outgroup member (MD). A choice in the middle of the matrix would achieve fairness (F), and one towards the right-hand end would achieve maximum joint group profit (MJP) and maximum ingroup profit (MIP). The shaded response thus indicates a compromise between strategies of maximum difference and fairness.

criteria, such as their preference for the abstract painters Klee and Kandinsky. Actually, though, assignment to one or other of the groups was random. (In fact, all participants were assigned to the same group.)

As is now well known, the key finding that emerged from these *minimal group studies* (as they were later dubbed) was that even the most stripped-down conditions were sufficient to encourage ingroup-favouring responses. That is, when using matrices like those in Figure 2.1 to assign points to unidentified members of the ingroup and outgroup, participants tended to deviate from a strategy of fairness by awarding more points to ingroup members than outgroup members. In so doing, the participants explicitly eschewed a strategy that would serve to maximize their ingroup's *absolute* economic gain in favor of one that maximized their *relative* gain over the outgroup.

For Turner (1975) and Tajfel (1978) the most important upshot of the minimal group studies was that they suggested that the mere act of individuals *categorizing themselves* as group members was sufficient to lead them to display ingroup favoritism. This conclusion was at odds with the predictions of psychodynamic and utilitarian theories (e.g., Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Sherif, 1966) and implied that significant forms of group behavior (in this case discrimination) could not be fully explained if they are understood solely 'in terms of "objective" conflicts of interest or in terms of deep-seated motives that [they] may serve' (Tajfel et al., 1971, p. 176).

Since Tajfel et al.'s (1971) initial studies, these findings have been extensively replicated and research has served to underline the role that internalized group membership plays in the observed results (Tajfel, 1978). Significantly, too, applied research by Brown (1978) has shown that the basic motivations revealed in minimal group settings are reproduced in work environments. For example, when employee groups negotiate wage settlements, a key goal is often not simply to earn as much as possible, but to preserve wage *differentials* that ensure one's own group earns more than others.

One of the critical points that Tajfel (1972) himself saw to emerge from the aforementioned minimal group studies was that when participants categorized themselves as members of a group this gave their behavior a *distinct meaning*. More specifically, he argued that 'social categorization required the establishment of a distinct and positively valued *social identity*' (Tajfel, 1972, p. 37, emphasis added). He defined social identity as 'the individual's knowledge that he [or she] belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him [or her] of this group membership' (p. 31). In other words, social identity is part of a person's sense of 'who they are' associated with any internalized group membership (see also Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999). This can be distinguished from the notion of *personal identity* which refers to self-knowledge that derives from an individual's unique attributes (Turner, 1982).

Social Identity Theory

Having noted the distinct ability of social identity to 'create and define the individual's place in society', Tajfel and Turner (1979, pp. 40–41) went on to formulate their *social identity theory* of intergroup behavior. As the title of their seminal chapter pronounced, this is an 'integrative theory' that attends to both the cognitive and motivational bases of intergroup differentiation. In essence it suggests that after being categorized in terms of a group membership, and having *defined themselves* in terms of that social categorization, individuals seek to achieve or maintain positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their ingroup from a comparison outgroup on some valued dimension. This quest for *positive distinctiveness* means that when people's sense of who they are is defined in terms of 'we' rather than 'I', they want to see 'us' as different to, and preferably as better than, 'them' in order to feel good about who they are and what they do.

In the minimal group situation Turner (1975) argued that, if participants identified with the social group they were assigned to, they engaged in a process of *social competition* involving comparison of the ingroup and the outgroup on the only available dimensions (point allocations). Participants then achieved positive distinctiveness for their own group by awarding it more points than the other group. This interpretation has been supported by a considerable body of subsequent research (for reviews see Brewer, 1979; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Turner, 1982; van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 1990). As Brown's (1978) research also shows, similar outcomes can be achieved in organizational contexts where employees strive to ensure that their ingroup not only does well, but does *better* than relevant others (see also Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, & Williams, 1986; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Such aspirations are routinely reflected in organizational mission statements which seek to

competitively position organizations (and their employees) in relation to key rivals. Consider, for example, the following advice:

> 'The most successful company missions are measurable, definable, and actionable project statements with emotional appeal that everyone knows and can act upon. For example, a mission to 'be the best health-care provider in the world' for a multi-national HMO organization sounds good. But a simple mission statement from Honda—'beat GM!'—is better'.
>
> (CCH Business Owner's Toolkit, 2004)

As we will discuss in more detail below (pp. 60–63), it is *not* the case, however, that social identity theory conceptualizes ingroup favoritism as an *inevitable* consequence of group membership. In both social and organizational literatures, researchers often assume that 'social categorization produces bias', but Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 41; see also Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994, p. 83) identified three variables upon which such an outcome depends. These were (a) the extent to which individuals identify with an ingroup and internalize that group membership as an aspect of their self-concept, (b) the extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison and competition between groups, and (c) the perceived relevance of the comparison outgroup, which itself depends on the relative and absolute status of the ingroup. Individuals are therefore likely to display favoritism only when an ingroup is central to their self-definition, when a given comparison is meaningful, and when the outcome of that comparison is in some sense contestable. In cases where these conditions are not met, people will not cease to pursue a positive social identity, but they will employ a *different strategy* to achieve this general goal.

The Interpersonal–Intergroup Continuum and Strategies of Self-enhancement

Despite the fact that the minimal group studies constitute the piece of research with which social identity theory is classically associated, in fact they provide only limited insight into the theory's analytic potential. A second important set of ideas examines how people's cognition and behavior are affected by movement along an interpersonal–intergroup continuum. These ideas developed from Tajfel's (1978) argument that behavior in general could be represented in terms of a bipolar *continuum* (see Figure 2.2). At one pole of this continuum, interaction is determined solely by the character and motivations of the individual *as an individual* (i.e., interpersonal behavior). At the other pole, behavior derives solely from the person's group membership (i.e., intergroup behavior). In making this distinction, Tajfel suggested that intergroup and interpersonal behavior were qualitatively distinct from each other: groups are not just collections of individuals and group behavior cannot be

Social identity salience

Low .... high

Behavior

Interpersonal .... intergroup

Reflected in

Perceived   Perceived
outgroup .... outgroup
heterogeneity   homogeneity

Non-uniform   Uniform
treatment .... treatment
of outgroup   of outgroup

Associated with

Social   Social
mobility .... change
beliefs   beliefs

Figure 2.2   Psychological and behavioral continua associated with the interpersonal–intergroup continuum.

After Tajfel (1978); reprinted from Haslam (2001), *Psychology in Organizations: The Social Identity Approach* (1st edn), London: Sage Publications.

explained in terms of interpersonal principles (see also Asch, 1951; Mayo, 1949). Furthermore, he argued that social identity processes come into play to the extent that behavior is defined at the intergroup extreme of this continuum.

Exactly where individuals place themselves on the interpersonal–intergroup continuum was understood by Tajfel to be a consequence of an interplay between social and psychological factors. Among these psychological factors, he argued that a person's ideological *belief structures* were particularly important. As Figure 2.2 indicates, these were seen to lie on another continuum between an ideology of *social mobility* and one of *social change* (Tajfel, 1975). Social mobility beliefs are characterized by a view that people are free to move between groups in order to improve or maintain their social standing. They are underpinned by an assumption that a given social system is flexible and, in particular, that the boundaries between groups are permeable. Social change beliefs, on the other hand, are underpinned by an assumption that it is not possible to escape one's group in order to advance as an individual. If one endorses such a view, the only prospect for improving negative conditions (or maintaining positive ones) is seen to lie in collective action.

Social identity theory's third strand integrates elements of the two that have already been discussed—analysis of discrimination in the minimal

group studies and of movement along the interpersonal–intergroup continuum. It does this by examining how people's shared understanding of status relations leads to *different strategies* for self-enhancement. How does a person's status, and the perceived basis of that status, affect their attempts to try to feel positive about themselves?

Among other things, social identity theory's answer to this question takes into account the extent to which people perceive group boundaries to be *permeable* and perceive their group's relative position on a dimension of social comparison to be *secure* in the sense of being both *stable* and *legitimate*. These perceptions are argued to have an impact on the strategies pursued by members of both low- and high-status groups. However, because Tajfel was primarily interested in the processes whereby low-status groups bring about social change, as originally formulated, social identity theory focused on the behavioral strategies of people who were members of low-status groups. These strategies are summarized schematically in Figure 2.3.

In brief, social identity theory proposes that, when members of low-status groups believe group boundaries are permeable, they should favor personal identity-based strategies of *individual mobility*—attempting simply to 'pass' from the low-status group into the more valued one. They should try to 'get
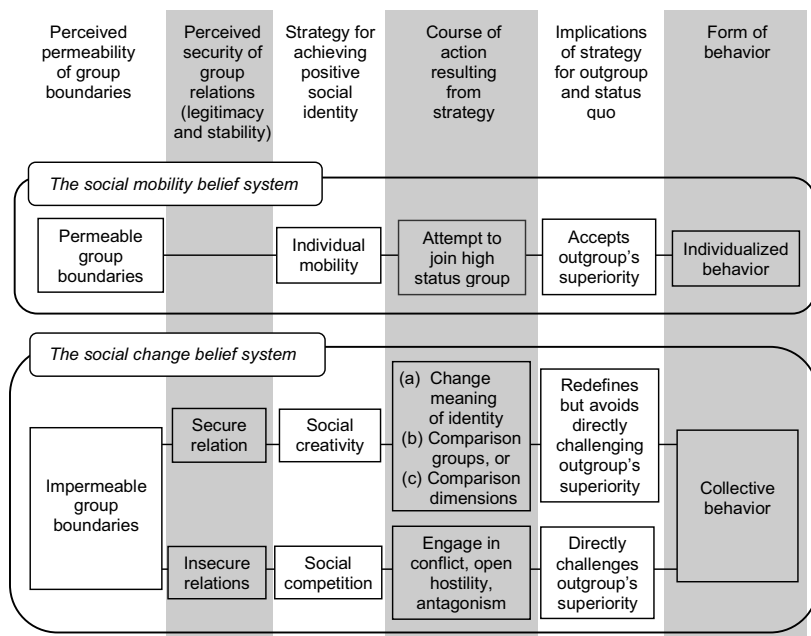
Figure 2.3 Social identity theory's predictions concerning the relationship between perceived social structure and strategies of self-enhancement for members of low-status groups.

After Tajfel & Turner (1979); reprinted from Haslam (2001), *Psychology in Organizations: The Social Identity Approach* (1st edn), London: Sage Publications.

ahead' by 'getting out'. However, when they believe boundaries are impermeable (so that group membership is fixed and 'getting out' is impossible), such strategies are ruled out. Here, if social relations are secure, low-status group members are predicted to try to redefine either (a) the nature of the intergroup relationship or (b) the value of the ingroup (or both) by demonstrating *social creativity*. They might do this, for example, by embracing a belief that 'We may not be as wealthy as them, but we're more friendly' (Ellemers, van Rijswijk, Roefs, & Simons, 1997; Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001). If relations are impermeable and *in*secure, members of low-status groups are more likely to engage in *social competition* with the high-status outgroup—engaging collectively in conflict processes designed to change the status quo (in ways that individual and social creativity do not).

Over the last 15 years a large body of social psychological research has supported these various predictions and elaborated their implications for a range of social phenomena. In particular, basic experimental research by Ellemers and her colleagues has confirmed that structural changes to intergroup relations do impact on low-status group members' behavior in ways envisaged by social identity theory (Doosje, Spears, & Ellemers, 2002; Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993). Research by Wright and his colleagues has also shown that members of low-status groups are far more likely to pursue strategies of conflict when access to a high-status group is impossible and the behavior of that group appears illegitimate. Under other conditions—especially when the high-status group promotes some 'token' low-status group members—low-status group members' behavior is far less likely to challenge the status quo (Wright, 1997; Wright & Taylor, 1998; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990; see also Boen & Vanbeselaere, 1998; Haslam & Reicher, 2002; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2000; Stott & Drury, 2004; Taylor, Moghaddam, Gamble, & Zellerer, 1987). As we will see below (pp. 73–74), in the last decade these hypotheses have also proved particularly fertile for organizational researchers seeking to understand the ways in which members of low-status groups in the workplace (e.g., women, 'dirty workers', members of ethnic minorities) respond to their predicament.

Self-categorization Theory

The previous section makes it clear that social identity theory is considerably richer than many textbook discussions suggest. In particular, the theory does much more than specify a link between assigned group membership and ingroup favoritism. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) analysis thus broaches a range of issues pertaining not just to social discrimination, but also to social categorization and social comparison, and not just to psychology, but also to social structure and behavioral strategy (three arms of the theory that Tajfel, 1979, p. 184, referred to as a 'conceptual tripod' upon which the

theory depended for its explanatory power; see Turner & Haslam, 2001). This complexity has led researchers in this tradition (e.g., Haslam & Reicher, 2002; Turner, 1999) to note that there is some danger in seeing the minimal group studies as providing a full (or even a representative) realization of the theory.

Nevertheless, despite social identity theory's richness, there are certain core questions concerning the nature, operation, and purpose of social identity that it does not address. What functions does social identity serve? What makes it salient? And what are its consequences? It was partly to answer such questions that *self-categorization theory* was developed by Turner and his colleagues in the 1980s (Turner, 1982, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994).

Self-categorization theory has a broader cognitive agenda than social identity theory and has greater explanatory scope, largely because its core hypotheses are not targeted specifically to issues of social structure and intergroup relations (Turner & Haslam, 2001; see also Haslam, 2001). So, although the terms *social identity approach* or *social identity perspective* can be used as shorthand for the full range of arguments and hypotheses that are generated by the two theories, there is intellectual and practical value in continuing to distinguish between them (Turner, 2004).

Formative work on self-categorization theory focused on the theoretical implications of the notion of social identity itself. In particular, to explain individuals' movement along Tajfel's interpersonal–intergroup continuum, Turner (1982) hypothesized that an individual's self-concept could itself be defined along a continuum ranging from a definition of the self in terms of personal identity to a definition in terms of social identity. Moreover, he proposed that the functioning of the self-concept *is the cognitive mechanism that underpins* the behavioral continuum described by Tajfel (1978). Turner (1982) thus argued that social identity actually *allowed* intergroup behavior to take place. As he put it, 'social identity is the cognitive mechanism that makes group behavior possible' (p. 21). Applying this idea to the organizational domain, one can argue that organizational identity (a social identity associated with membership of a given organization or organizational unit) is what makes organizational behavior possible (Haslam, Postmes et al., 2003).

A further important part of Turner's contribution was to specify a *psychological process* associated with the 'switching on' of social identity. Turner (1982) called this *depersonalization*. This refers to a process of *self-stereotyping* through which *the self comes to be perceived as categorically interchangeable with other ingroup members*. Elaborating upon Tajfel's (1978) hypothesis that in intergroup contexts individuals will tend to perceive outgroups as homogeneous (see Figure 2.2), Turner predicted that social identity salience should lead to the *ingroup* being seen as similarly homogeneous. Employees who are involved in conflict between their company and another should therefore tend to emphasize similarities among

members of *both* companies—not just the rival one (see also Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995). Similar processes may also emerge at a higher level of categorization. For instance, Peteraf and Shanley (1997) observe that, for strategic reasons, rival firms sometimes emphasize the similarities among them as they position themselves as belonging to the same group within the broader industry (see also Hodgkinson, 2001a, b; Hodgkinson & Sparrow, 2002).

For the purposes of the analysis of organizational behavior, this argument is crucial. In essence, it suggests that group behavior is associated with qualitative changes in the structure of the self. As an individual, 'who one is' (and therefore what one *does* and *seeks* to do) is defined in terms of one's idiosyncratic personal attributes, but as a group member the self (and the actions and aspirations this dictates) is defined in terms of stereotypical attributes (e.g., values and goals) that are shared with others who are perceived to be representative of the same social category.

The main contribution of early work on self-categorization theory was to elaborate upon the workings and implications of this depersonalization process. This elaboration was formalized in a number of core assumptions and related hypotheses of which five are most important (Turner, 1985; Turner et al., 1987; see also Oakes, 1996; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994, 1998).

First, cognitive representations of the self take the form of *self-categorizations*. That is, the self is seen as a member of a particular class or category of stimuli. As such it is perceived to be (a) more or less equivalent to the other stimuli in that category, and (b) more or less distinct from stimuli in other categories. So, for example, when a woman categorizes herself as a doctor she acknowledges her equivalence to other doctors and her difference from, say, nurses or patients.

Second, self- and other categories exist at different levels of abstraction with higher levels being more inclusive (cf. Rosch, 1978). Lower level categories (e.g., doctor, nurse) can be subsumed within higher ones (e.g., health professional) and are defined in relation to comparisons made at those higher levels. Three levels of abstraction are particularly important: self-categorization (a) at the superordinate *human* level as a human being (in contrast to other species), (b) at the intermediate *social* level as an ingroup member (as distinct from outgroups), and (c) at the subordinate *personal* level as a unique individual (different from other relevant ingroup members). Importantly, self-categories at all levels of abstraction are seen to be equally 'real' and just as much a reflection of a person's 'true' self. No one level of self-categorization is inherently more appropriate or useful than another and, hence, none is in any sense more accurate or more fundamental to who or what the person is. It is worth noting too, that this proposition is at odds with the general tendency for organizational and industrial psychologists (after Münsterberg, 1913) to give privileged status to personal identity—believing that a person's *true* self is defined by their individuality and that departure from this necessarily involves a distortion of the self.

Third, the formation and salience (i.e., cognitive activation) of any self-category is partly determined by comparisons between stimuli at a more inclusive level of abstraction. More specifically, the formation of self-categories is a function of the *meta-contrast* between inter-class and intra-class differences. This means that within a frame of reference comprising salient stimuli, any given collection of stimuli will be perceived as a categorical entity to the extent that their differences from each other are seen to be less than the differences between them and all other stimuli. Thus, for example, while an administrator and a secretary can be seen to represent different professional groups within the organization, they are more likely to see themselves as sharing a higher level social identity as office staff if they meet in a context that includes people who are not office staff (customers, say). This is because here the differences between them are likely to be seen as small relative to those between them and the customers. In this way, self-categorization is a *context-determined* process based on sensitivity to *relative differences*.

Fourth, just as the meta-contrast principle is a partial determinant of *which* categories perceivers use to represent a given stimulus array, so too is it a partial determinant of the *internal structure* of those categories. Following the theorizing of cognitive psychologists (e.g., Barsalou, 1987; Rosch, 1978), categories are assumed to have an internally *graded structure so that some features of a category (e.g., particular behaviors, attributes, or individuals) define it better than others. This means that, while all members of the same category share a certain degree of proto-typicality*, they also differ in the extent to which they are perceived to be representative or prototypical of it. All professional footballers may be considered physically fit, but some are perceived to be more fit than others.

More specifically, it follows from the meta-contrast principle that any particular category member can be seen as more or less prototypical of the category, depending on which other categories are salient in a given context, and how he or she compares with the members of these other categories. That is, a category member will seem more prototypical of his or her category as he or she differs more clearly from members of other categories. However, which categories need to be differentiated, and which category members most clearly represent these differences depends on the situation and the categories that are relevant to that context. In a comparison with cleaners, a relatively well-qualified secretary may be quite prototypical of the category 'secretary' because that person partly embodies the *difference* between secretaries and cleaners, but in comparison with academics that same person's prototypicality will tend to decrease relative to someone who is more practical and 'hands-on', as this latter dimension embodies the difference between secretaries and academics (Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, & Onorato, 1995; Hogg, Turner, & David, 1990; Mackie & Cooper, 1984;

McGarty, Turner, Hogg, David, & Wetherell, 1992; van Knippenberg, de Vries, & van Knippenberg, 1990).

Finally, fifth, the salience of a categorization at a particular level of abstraction leads to the accentuation of perceived intra-class similarities and inter-class differences between people as defined by their category membership at the same level. In this way, patterns of accentuation reflect the extent of people's categorical interchangeability. For example, if a woman's social self-category 'doctor' becomes salient, other doctors will be perceived to be more similar to each other (and her) and more different from non-doctors (whose similarity to each other will also be accentuated) on dimensions that are seen to define membership of those categories (e.g., knowledge of medicine).

Social Identity Salience

Although they are quite complex, the above hypotheses can be used to develop an analysis of *social identity salience* (Oakes, 1987; Oakes et al., 1991, 1994; Turner, 1985). As already noted, this specifies the processes that dictate *whether* a person defines themselves in terms of personal or social identity and, when social identity is salient, *which* particular group membership serves to guide behavior (see Figure 2.4). In any given organization, when will employees see and act as individuals, rather than in terms
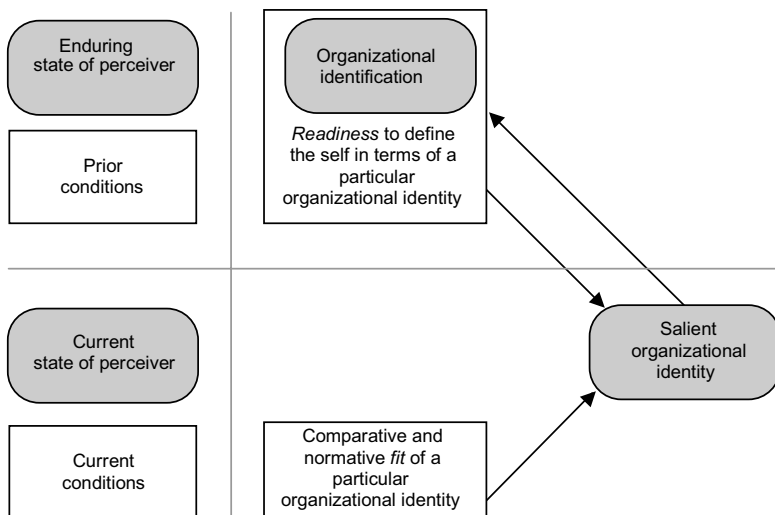
Figure 2.4 The inter-relationship between organizational identification and organizational identity salience.

of the department or team to which they belong, or in terms of the organization as a whole? Answering this question is extremely important, because the *particular* level at which organizational members define themselves has distinctive implications both for their own behavior and for the functioning of the organization as a whole (Ellemers, de Gilder, & van den Heuvel, 1998; Riketta & van Dick, in press; van Dick, 2004; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004, in press; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000).

Following the work of Bruner (e.g., 1957), one crucial determinant of social category salience is *fit*. This is the degree to which a social categorization matches subjectively relevant features of reality—so that the category appears to be a sensible way of organizing and making sense of social stimuli (i.e., people and things associated with them). It has two components: comparative and normative.

Comparative fit is defined by the principle of meta-contrast outlined in the previous section. This leads us to expect that a person will define themselves in terms of a particular self-category to the extent that the differences between members of that category on a given dimension of judgement are perceived to be smaller than the differences between members of that category and others that are salient in a particular context. One broad implication of this principle is that people will be more likely to categorize themselves as group members in intergroup rather than intragroup contexts (Haslam, Oakes, Turner, & McGarty, 1995; Turner, 1985). For example, academics employed at different faculties should be more likely to define themselves as university employees in situations where they compete with other universities (e.g., in attracting incoming students) than when they compete internally for the allocation of financial resources among different faculties within the university.

Normative fit arises from the *content* of the match between category specifications and the stimuli being represented. In order to represent sets of people as members of distinct categories, the differences between those sets must not only appear to be larger than the differences within them (comparative fit), but the *nature* of these differences must also be consistent with the perceiver's expectations about the categories (Oakes et al., 1991). For example, workers are more likely to be categorized in terms of their gender when male and female employees hold different attitudes about maternity leave then when there is a difference of opinion about marketing strategies. If these content-related expectations are not met, the social categorization will not be invoked to make sense of events and define the person's own action.

Importantly, too, as Figure 2.4 indicates, principles of fit determine category salience in interaction with *perceiver readiness* (or *accessibility*; Oakes et al., 1994; Turner et al., 1994). Individuals do not come to social encounters with a mind that is a *tabula rasa* and then proceed mechanically to process information in a dispassionate, uninvolved manner in order to decide

whether or not a particular person should be seen as a member of a particular category (see Mowday & Sutton, 1993). Rather, categorization also depends on the perceiver's *prior* expectations, goals, and theories—many of which derive from group memberships and group encounters. People organize and construe the world in ways that reflect the groups to which they belong and in this way their *social histories* lend stability, predictability, and continuity to experience (Barreto, Ellemers, & Palacios, in press; Fiol, 2001; Oakes et al., 1994; Peteraf & Shanley, 1997; Reicher, 1996; Rousseau, 1998; Turner & Giles, 1981).

Identification with a social category—the extent to which the category (e.g., a workteam, a department, an organization) is valued and self-involving, and contributes to an enduring sense of self—is therefore one particularly important factor which affects a person's readiness to use that social category in order to define themselves (e.g., Doosje & Ellemers, 1997; Doosje et al., 1995; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Fiol, 2001; Kramer, 1993; Rousseau, 1998; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997; Turner, 1999). Among other things, when a person identifies strongly with a given organization, he or she will be more prepared to interpret the world, and their own place within it, in a manner consistent with that organization's values, ideology, and culture (Kramer, Brewer, & Hanna, 1996; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Rousseau, 1998). For this reason, as we document in more detail below (e.g., pp. 64–65, 79–81), identification has proved to be an incredibly useful construct in organizational psychology (Haslam, Postmes et al., 2003).

Social Identity and Social Influence

To complement the ideas reviewed in the previous sections, which are directed to the explanation of psychological processes (e.g., judgement, categorization), we will now address the ongoing consequences of these processes for the *active coordination* of individuals' perception and behavior in social interaction. A key assertion of self-categorization theory in this respect is that social identity serves to regulate individual cognitive activity not only by providing a shared perspective on social reality and a common set of experiences but also by *providing a basis for mutual social influence* (Turner, 1987, 1991). That is, when people perceive themselves to share category membership with another person in a given context they not only *expect to agree* with that person on issues relevant to their shared identity but are also motivated to *strive actively to reach agreement and coordinate their behavior* in relation to those issues. They should attempt to do this by, among other things, identifying shared beliefs, specifying frames of reference, articulating background knowledge, clarifying points of disagreement, and exchanging relevant information.

This is one of the primary functions of key organizational processes such as communication, persuasion, negotiation, and argument (see, e.g., Haslam,

2004; Postmes, 2003). Moreover, as Mayo (1949) acknowledged, it is precisely through individuals' identification of, and conformity to, norms that are perceived to be shared with others in a particular context that their potentially idiosyncratic views become socially organized and consensual. Through this process individual views are coordinated and transformed into *shared* values, beliefs, and behaviors. These values and beliefs have particular force because they are no longer experienced as subjective but instead articulate a common, as-if-objective view (Bar-Tal, 1998; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Reynolds, 1998; Moscovici, 1984). In this way *personal opinion* can become *social fact*. '*I think* it is important to work overtime' can become '*It is* important to work overtime'; '*I think* we are the best' can become '*We are* the best'.

The importance of social influence processes is highlighted in the classic studies by Sherif (1936) and Asch (1951), which clarified the power of ingroups to regulate and structure individual cognitive activity. At the most general level, though, it is apparent that categorization-based processes of influence are central to the transformation of low-level individual inputs (e.g., opinions, attitudes) into higher order group products (e.g., shared norms, organizational culture). In effect, then, these processes provide the all-important psychological conduit between personal perception and organizational behavior. Once again, as we will see below (pp. 84–87), this idea provides an essential platform for significant organizational insights.

SOCIAL IDENTITY CONTROVERSIES

In the above discussion we have tried to outline and contextualize the key ideas that inform social identity work and to clarify both the rationale for those developments and their relationship to alternative approaches from which social identity work is distinguished. This is important because, although researchers who work with social identity concepts usually indicate how their hypotheses are derived from theory, as a rule these empirical accounts do not afford them much scope for elaborating upon the broader theoretical framework from which specific ideas originate. Therefore, especially for those who work on concrete work-related issues or organizational problems, it can be difficult to make sense of the social identity framework and to keep abreast of relevant theoretical developments. As a result, specific ideas tend to be examined at some distance from the theoretical context in which they were developed and can come to be seen as quite detached from the broader perspective in which they make sense.

A number of factors are responsible for this. These include the fact that social identity ideas were developed mainly by social psychologists working outside of the US (most notably in Europe, Canada, and Australia), implying

that they are not only inspired by different societal phenomena, but also that they are informed by a different metatheory from that which characterizes 'mainstream' social and organizational psychology (see Turner & Oakes, 1986, 1997). However, in the context of the recent explosion of interest in this work, the lack of detailed information about the theoretical underpinnings of the social identity approach has contributed to a range of confusions and misunderstandings about the nature of the theory and the contributions that it is—or is not—in a position to make (e.g., see McGarty, 2001; Turner, 1999; Turner & Haslam, 2001). Before we can consider how social-identity-theorizing can further our understanding of problems in industrial and organizational psychology, there is therefore some value in first trying to clarify and resolve these controversies.

Beyond Piecemeal Empiricism

Social identity theory can be characterized as a 'grand theory'. That is, in contrast to theoretical approaches that focus on a particular mechanism or process, or approaches that apply to a specific set of variables, social identity theory tries to capture the dynamic interplay of situational and individual characteristics in order to understand how these might affect a broad range of relevant processes in a variety of social and organizational contexts. Furthermore, many (but not all) researchers working in the social identity tradition have seen their work as providing the opportunity to refine and extend initial formulations of the theory, rather than presenting it as the basis of a novel or alternative perspective. As a result, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) original insights have been considerably elaborated on the basis of empirical knowledge that has accumulated over the last 25 years. While the contributions of Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) and of Turner et al. (1987) continue to be regarded as seminal statements of social identity and self-categorization ideas, respectively, efforts have been made to provide periodic updates or further theoretical developments based on this empirical progress (e.g., Oakes et al., 1994; Turner et al., 1994; Turner & Reynolds, 2001).

These efforts to incorporate more complex predictions into a single overarching framework have made it possible to identify important moderating variables that determine which processes are likely to have a bearing on behavior in any given situation. This more sophisticated understanding has made it clear that straightforward one-to-one predictions—e.g., that similarity enhances group commitment and thereby improves group performance (Chattopadhyay, 1999; Polzer et al., 2002)—do not capture the essence of the complex processes to which key variables relate. These complexities also need to be taken on board in order to provide appropriate advice about how to optimize work processes and organizational performance. For example, whether intragroup similarity facilitates or inhibits commitment

and group performance depends on contextual expectations and task characteristics that require group members to be similar or different (van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003; Rink & Ellemers, 2003).

At the same time, the specific questions that industrial and organizational psychologists are confronted with are typically phrased in a way that invites a conceptualization in relatively limited terms [for example: 'Will an emphasis on the success of an organization facilitate recruitment?' (e.g., Turban & Greening, 1997)]. In turn, such narrow conceptualizations may cause them to overlook additional important consequences [for example: 'Yes, but it may reduce motivation to further improve organizational performance' (e.g., Ouwerkerk, Ellemers, & De Gilder, 1999)].

Against this, one may argue that some questions *are* relatively straightforward, and that it is not necessary to raise additional issues when these appear to be irrelevant. The consideration of isolated variables as possible predictors of important outcomes (e.g., the inclusion of identification in a regression analysis aiming to predict differences in productivity) can often produce powerful results. However, a danger of this approach is that it invites researchers to catalog main effects rather than to examine the interactions that reveal how different variables can moderate each other's influence. And without the overarching grand theory to connect separate effects, these findings often prove hard to reconcile, and in fact may seem to be fundamentally incompatible (see Pfeffer, 1997). This is true, for example, of productivity research, which shows that social identity can contribute both to an increase in output and to a reduction (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004), and of research on stress, which shows that social support can increase stress or reduce it (Haslam, 2004).

However, when it is *truly* the case that research aims to understand single relations between isolated variables, the focus on specific predictions is not necessarily problematic. Indeed, it may not even make sense to consider more complex or conditional hypotheses when these do not apply to the situation under investigation. It is problematic, though, to assume that the prediction of single relations is all that social identity theory has to offer, and then to criticize it for failing to address more complex issues, or for not being able to account for interactive effects between different predictors (e.g., Jost & Elsbach, 2001; Huddy, 2001; see Turner, 1999 for a more elaborate discussion of this issue). On this basis, researchers have sometimes packaged as novel ideas some that in fact are largely restatements of pre-existing predictions. In the interests of theoretical parsimony, we consider this undesirable (cf. Aronson, 1997).

In sum, we argue that it is important to consider social identity as a grand theory, but not because we feel it should always be addressed in its full complexity or because the theory has some special 'sovereignty' (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Rather, this is because such a stance allows researchers (a) to assess properly the situations in which it can provide an explanatory

framework for understanding processes in which they are interested and (b) to provide a fair judgement of the ways in which it falls short of this aim or requires further elaboration.

Beyond Individual Difference

In industrial and organizational psychology, there is a long tradition (dating back to Münsterberg, 1913) of construing the psychological dimensions of behavior in terms of people's individual character. This would appear to make sense on a practical level, when the aim is to inform personnel selection and development, and at a more scientific level it is often seen as offering a useful approach to studies that aim to maximize the amount of variance that can be accounted for in seeking to explain critical outcomes. This fits within a more general tendency to assess the ways in which individual dispositions interact with organizational requirements—a tendency reflected in the popularity of contingency approaches to leadership, negotiation, motivation, and so on.

Accordingly, the research tradition that has developed in I/O psychology dictates that researchers who introduce a novel theoretical construct first assume the burden of showing (a) that the new concept can be measured reliably, (b) that it can be meaningfully distinguished from other related constructs, and (c) that it can explain additional variance in important outcome variables above and beyond these other constructs. As a result, considerable research effort and debate focuses on these conceptual and measurement issues before further theoretical or empirical questions come into play. This is reflected in the initial work on social identity which aimed to assess, first, whether organizational identification was different from job involvement, loyalty, or commitment (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Gautam, van Dick, & Wagner, in press; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Pratt, 1998) and, second, whether it might predict a variety of behavioral outcomes—from absenteeism and turnover to discretionary efforts and compliance with organizational norms—better than other candidate variables (e.g., Ouwerkerk et al., 1999; Riketta, 2005). This has clearly been a useful way of introducing the construct of organizational identity into the literature, and of demonstrating its relevance for the understanding of individual behavior in organizations.

However, the mere fact that social identification (one determinant of social identity salience; see Figure 2.4) can be measured using standard techniques (self-report scales) does not mean that it should be treated *as if it were* an individual difference. Doing this creates a range of problems. Most notably, it promotes a psychologized version of the theory that treats the structure of the self as fixed and static—which it is not (Onorato & Turner, 2004)—and it draws attention away from the structural and contextual dynamics that shape those psychological processes and which in turn encourage or inhibit a

conception of self as a member of a larger collective (e.g., a workteam or organization).

To conceptualize social identification as an individual difference variable fails singularly to capture the essence of the social identity approach. When treated in this way, the approach proves to have no more explanatory power than other individual difference approaches which are limited precisely because they incorporate a partial model of self and fail to appreciate the dynamic interplay of self and context (Turner & Onorato, 1999). In fact, the theory argues explicitly against this view. Among other things, this is because it maintains that social identity concerns *transform individual differences into group similarities* (a similar point has also been made by Mayo, 1949).

Furthermore, conceiving of organizational identification as a relatively stable individual difference variable discourages the consideration of more process-oriented questions about the dynamics of identification. These are not only theoretically challenging, but also highly relevant from a practical point of view. For instance, managers who have to deal with people who are already employed by their organization may be less interested in selection issues than in the question of how they can *promote* identification with a given organization or organizational entity, and will wonder whether identification is likely to suffer from the decisions they take (e.g., in the context of organizational development), and, if so, to consider how they might prevent this.

A related concern is that, in practice, people belong to several different groups at the same time, with the result that they have multiple possible identities (Ashforth, 2001a; Ellemers et al., 1998). In a work context, for instance, the same individual can be seen, and see him/herself, as part of the organization (e.g., a Ford employee), as a member of a particular professional group (e.g., a metal worker), or as a member of a particular ethnic group (e.g., a Mexican immigrant; Ellemers et al., 2004; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, in press). In a strategic management context, Hodgkinson and Johnson (1994) have discussed how the mental models held by managers concerning the definition of their business competitors are influenced by multiple sources of identity, including national, organizational, functional group, and professional influences (see also Hodgkinson & Sparrow, 2002). So, merely to establish that a person has a strong or weak sense of organizational identity is not necessarily very informative if we do not know how this compares with, and relates to, other potentially competing identities (e.g., Eggins, Reynolds, & Haslam, 2003; Hornsey & Hogg, 1999; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996). The significance of this point is elaborated below (pp. 70–71). Due to contextual variations that affect the relative fit and salience of the different groups or entities that one can identify with, the same individual can show either high or low levels of organizational identification over time and across situations, depending on the extent to

which relevant situational features speak to that part of the self that is associated with the organization (cf. Hodgkinson & Sparrow, 2002).

Moreover, even in contexts where the organization is clearly relevant to employees' self-definitions, it is not self-evident that the extent to which they identify with the organization is the most appropriate predictor of displays of loyalty or of work behavior that benefits the organization. That is, psychological ties between the organization and the self can focus on different aspects or constituencies within the organization and, hence, may result in behavior that is either beneficial or harmful for the organization, depending on the norms and goals of that constituency and how these relate to the norms and goals of the organization as a whole. For instance, workers who strongly identify with particular organizational values or practices are likely to resist forms of organizational development that aim to adapt those values and/or alter those practices (Ellemers, 2003). In a similar vein, when employees identify with the organization through the ties with their workteam, this may lead them to compensate for or hide any errors made by their colleagues, instead of addressing these deficiencies and trying to improve them—while the latter would arguably be more desirable from an organizational point of view (Ellemers et al., 1998; see also Christ, van Dick, Wagner, & Stellmacher, 2003; Riketta & van Dick, in press; van Dick, 2004; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). This again illustrates that it only makes sense to treat organizational identification as a variable of interest when aiming to predict behavior that relates to people's organizational identities (e.g., organizational turnover). For researchers or managers who are interested in other forms of behavior (e.g., helping team members, continued professional education, participation in anti-discrimination activities), knowledge of a person's level of organizational identification would be of limited utility. In these cases, they would be better advised to examine the specific identities that underpin specific organizational activities (in these examples, perhaps by looking at whether people identify with their workteam, with their professional group, or with those who share the same ethnic background).

To summarize, although we will elaborate below (pp. 64–65, 79–81) on the reasons researchers and managers might wish to assess the extent to which workers identify with their organization, we maintain that treating social and organizational identification as *individual difference* variables limits their practical usefulness and does not do justice to the nature of the identification construct as conceptualized within the social identity approach. First, this is because a more theoretically interesting and practically relevant challenge is to examine the ways in which people are encouraged to increase or reduce their identification with the organization rather than simply to assess (and reify) a particular person's level of identification. Second, an individual difference approach seems inappropriate because it overlooks changes in levels of identification across situations and over time (i.e., the fact that

identification is a dependent, rather than an independent variable; Doosje et al., 2002), and draws attention away from the psychological process and contextual factors responsible for this fluctuation. Finally, third, focusing on individual differences in organizational identification can be misleading when one's aim is to understand or predict behavior that is guided by identification with other organizational constituencies. This is particularly important when these constituencies have norms, values, and goals that do not directly map on to the norms or goals of the organization as a whole.

Beyond Ingroup Bias

As we intimated above, it is not unusual for textbooks and secondary accounts of social identity theory to present the empirical fact of intergroup discrimination (and the neat demonstration of this in the minimal group studies) as the theory's core idea. Illustrative of this tendency, Jost and Elsbach (2001, p. 182) present a critique of 'the main applications of social identity theory to organizational contexts' in which they question what they see as three of the theory's main assumptions. They summarize these assumptions as follows:

(a) the assumption that ingroup bias is a general or default motive or strategy;
(b) the assumption that low-status group members compensate for identity threats by increasing levels of ingroup bias; and
(c) the assumption that people prefer to interact with members of their own groups than with members of other groups.

These assumptions are said to be derived from the writings of 'some very prominent interpreters' (Jost & Elsbach, 2001, p. 183), although it is notable that these do not include the actual proponents of the theory (i.e., Tajfel or Turner). Criticism of these assumptions is then backed up by a review of research which demonstrates, among other things, (a) that groups (particularly low-status ones) often display outgroup favoritism (e.g., Ellemers et al., 1993; Mummendey & Schreiber, 1983; Spears & Manstead, 1989), (b) that members of high-status groups often display more ingroup bias than members of low-status groups (particularly in organizational contexts; e.g., Baron & Pfeffer, 1994), and (c) that homophily (liking or attraction to ingroup members) is more marked in the behavior of high-status than low-status groups (e.g., Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Hite, 1995).

Elaborating on this evidence, Jost and Elsbach (2001) go on to present an alternative *system justification theory* of group behavior in organizations. A core argument of this theory is that members of low-status groups often find it extremely difficult to challenge the established hierarchy of social relations and, hence, their behavior often tends tacitly to accept and reproduce that hierarchy rather than to challenge it. One consequence of this is that

members of low-status groups often experience conflict with their identity-related motivations (e.g., to self-enhance, to have positive self-regard) in a way that high-status group members do not. One example Jost and Elsbach cite in this regard concerns women who come to see their low pay relative to men as a deserved and a valid reflection of inferior ability, even when men do not (e.g., see Major, 1994).

There is much in Jost and Elsbach's (2001) contribution that is valuable and timely. Particularly welcome is their attention to the complex reactions of low-status group members, and to the distinctly negative outcomes (e.g., for well-being) associated with membership in such groups. Nevertheless, as a critique of social identity theory, their arguments are puzzling. In the first instance, this is because, as we have been at pains to stress, there is no sense in which the three assumptions presented by Jost and Elsbach are contained within (or even compatible with) social identity theory. Reacting to similar claims by other researchers (e.g., Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, pp. 19–20), Turner (1999, pp. 20–21) thus comments:

> Social identity theory never advanced the hypothesis of a direct causal connection between ingroup identification and ingroup bias. ... It always assumed that whether or not ingroup bias was observed was a function of the specific intergroup comparison being made and the interaction between the relative status position of the ingroup, the perceived impermeability of group boundaries and the nature of the perceived differences on the relevant dimension.

Along similar lines, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) original analysis also makes it clear why compensatory bias (in response to ingroup threat) and homophily will vary as a function of these same factors. For example, the idea that, when status relations are perceived to be stable and legitimate, members of low-status groups will adopt strategies of social creativity that reinforce the status quo, is clearly at odds with any suggestion that ingroup favoritism and homophily are inevitable. Moreover, this idea is also consistent with much of the evidence for system justification that Jost and Elsbach discuss. In short, in those contexts where it is manifest, evidence of system justification appears to support social identity theory rather than to undermine it (see also Tajfel, 1984).

In this respect it is interesting to note that findings very similar to those that Jost and Elsbach (2001) discuss have actually been presented by other researchers as evidence that is suggested by and *supports* social identity theory. This is true, for example, of work showing (a) that women find discrimination against women more threatening, offensive, and harmful than men find discrimination against men (Branscombe, 1998; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002) and (b) that women's reactions to sexism depend on social–structural and

motivational factors (Fajak & Haslam, 1998; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003).

Further research also provides evidence of a number of other behavioral nuances that are consistent with social identity and self-categorization principles. For example, research by Mummendey and colleagues has shown that group members are less likely to display ingroup favoritism when they are awarding penalties rather than rewards—a finding which Reynolds et al. (2000; Turner & Reynolds, 2001) explain in terms of self-categorization theory's principles of comparative and normative fit. Research in hospitals and scientific organizations by Terry and her colleagues examining the reactions of high- and low-status groups to organizational mergers has also found that employees of the high-status group typically show ingroup favoritism when evaluating the two groups on status-relevant dimensions, but that they display outgroup favoritism on status-irrelevant dimensions (Terry & Callan, 1998; see also Terry et al., 2001; Terry & O'Brien, 2001; for an overview see Terry, 2003). As a corollary, members of the low-status group are more likely to acknowledge the inferiority of the ingroup on status-relevant dimensions, but to accentuate their superiority on the status-irrelevant ones. These patterns are understood by the authors to be highly consistent with social identity theory's predictions concerning the dimensions on which high- and low-status groups are likely to display ingroup *and* outgroup favoritism, depending on the stability of intergroup differences and the reality constraints these represent (see also Ellemers, van Rijswijk et al., 1997).

Along related lines, early field studies by Stephenson and Brotherton (1973, 1975) also found that the level of discrimination between coal mine employees was not constant across groups but depended on the level of pre-existing disagreement between groups as well as their relative size (see also Sachdev & Bourhis, 1984). In a slightly different vein, research has also shown that people's willingness to display ingroup favoritism is constrained by *audience* factors. In interaction with group status, *surveillance* from ingroup and outgroup members is thus a critical moderator of acts that favor the ingroup and disadvantage the outgroup (Ellemers, van Dyck, Hinkle, & Jacobs, 2000). Among other things, this means that individuals are less likely to discriminate against an ingroup or an outgroup to the extent that their behavior is monitored by members of those groups, although this itself depends on the status of those groups, the positions of individuals within them, and the security of intergroup relations (Barreto & Ellemers, 2001; Ellemers, Barreto, & Spears, 1999; Haslam & Reicher, 2002; Jetten et al., 2004; Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995; Reicher & Levine, 1994).

Taken together, the above data scotch any suggestion that when a given social identity is salient, motivations to enhance the ingroup will always play themselves out in displays of ingroup favoritism. Again, not only does social identity theory never predict that they would, it clearly predicts the opposite. Paradoxically, though, the fact that many commentators remain blind to this

fact can be attributed partly to the success of the original minimal group studies, and partly to other factors including tendencies toward individualism and psychologization (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Again, this is because secondary accounts of these studies often lead researchers to believe that the core message of social identity theory is that, when in groups, people automatically evince ingroup favoritism and prejudice (Turner & Oakes, 1997). Ironically, then, such interpretations of the theory lead people away from an analysis of content and context, whereas a proper appreciation of the theory's reasoning should actually turn them *toward* it (Turner, 1999, pp. 33–34; Turner & Reynolds, 2001, p. 149; see also Lalonde, 2002, p. 627).

Beyond Interdependence, Exchange, and Personal Self-interest

We noted above that one of the main reasons why the minimal group studies had such dramatic impact when they were published was that they challenged established models of group behavior which argued that intergroup discrimination was contingent upon (a) ties of interdependence between group members (Homans, 1951; Lott & Lott, 1965; Rabbie, Schot, & Visser, 1989), (b) principles of reciprocal exchange (e.g., Adams, 1965; Blau, 1964; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), or (c) quasi-economic assessments of the pros and cons of particular courses of action and the instrumental pursuit of one's personal self-interest (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). In a situation that is characterized by an almost Kafkaesque emptiness, individuals reliably award more points to an unknown member of an arbitrary ingroup with whom there has been no history of interaction, with whom there is no prospect of future interaction, and where there is no potential for this to impact upon their personal losses or gains. Moreover, since the minimal group studies were carried out, a large body of research has tested the social-identity-based explanations of Tajfel et al.'s (1971) findings against those based on other factors (e.g., cultural norms, demand characteristics, assumed similarity, expected reciprocity). This research has lent consistent support to Tajfel and Turner's conclusions (see, e.g., Bourhis, Turner, & Gagnon, 1997; Diehl, 1990; Turner & Bourhis, 1996).

Nevertheless, within organizational psychology, models which argue for the primacy of individual self-interest and interdependence as motivators of group behavior still prevail. For example, influential models of (a) organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988), (b) cooperation (Komorita & Parks, 1994), (c) leadership (Chemers, 1987; Hollander, 1995), (d) stakeholder mobilization (Frooman, 1999; Savage, Nix, Whitehead, & Blair, 1991), (e) turnover (Rusbult & van Lange, 1996), and (f) industrial action (Klandermans, 1984) are all founded upon principles of rational choice which suggest that individuals choose particular paths of organizational action (e.g., to work unpaid overtime, to help others, to follow directives, to lobby a board

of directors, to leave a job, or to go on strike) based on the prospect of these paths proving beneficial rather than costly for the individual self.

However, in the past decade or so, scholars have started pointing out the limits of rational choice models to explain behavior in organizations (e.g., Hodgkinson & Sparrow, 2002), and a range of research programs has competitively tested these arguments against alternative social-identity-based models (e.g., Abrams, Ando, & Hinkle, 1998; Kelly, 1993; Jetten, O'Brien, & Trindall, 2002; Tyler & Blader, 2000; for related commentary see Akerlof & Kranton, 2000; Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003; and Schrager, 1985). Each of these tests provides compelling support for two conclusions. First, they indicate that identity-based concerns can be conceptually and practically *distinguished* from interest-based concerns. Thus, while both may independently influence the way people behave toward each other, there is no sense in which concerns to enhance social identity are *reducible* to a desire to enhance personal gain. Second, studies that directly compare the two effects all provide evidence that identity-based concerns are a *superior* predictor of organizational choices and actions than interest-based analyses.

As an example of these points, research by Kelly and Kelly (1994) has shown that social identification with a union was a much better predictor of willingness to engage in industrial action than perceptions of personal or collective injustice (see also Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Veenstra & Haslam, 2000). Reflecting on such data, Klandermans (1997)—who had previously advocated a rational choice approach—conceded that his model's assumptions were incomplete and needed to incorporate social-identity-related concerns to increase its predictive power (see also Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Similarly, Kelly and Breinlinger (1996) argue that assumptions of rationality are especially strained in cases of protracted industrial disputes. In these situations, union members often bear the financial and social burden of extreme hardship and are usually all too well aware of the fact that personal benefits, if gained at all, may be slight. For an individual, the 'rational' action would appear to be to leave (or not join) the union, let others do the protesting, and then reap the benefits of any successes they achieve (e.g., in the form of a pay rise or better working conditions). Likewise, Rowley and Moldoveanu (2003) note that interest-based models of stakeholder protest would lead one to predict (a) that in many situations individuals would not protest when they in fact do (e.g., at a shareholders' meeting, where they have a trivial proportion of the votes) and (b) that on even more occasions individuals would protest when they in fact do not (e.g., when their personal livelihood is threatened by a company's pollution policy).

In one of the most extensive programs of research to date, Tyler and Blader (2000) explicitly compared the ability of interest-based and identity-based factors to predict a range of cooperative behaviors in organizations, such as compliance and extra-role behavior (see also Smith, Tyler, & Huo, 2003; Tyler, 1999). Their findings indicated that, when considered alone, inter-

est-based factors (e.g., resources obtained, possible sanctions, and incentives) combined to predict a reliable but small proportion of such behavior (around 10%) but that when their predictive capacity was assessed alongside social-identity-based factors (e.g., pride, respect, trust) the contribution of interest-based factors to the explanation of extra-role behavior reduced dramatically (to around 0.6%) and was substantially lower than that of social-identity-based factors (which was around 16%). On the basis of this and other similar evidence, Tyler and Blader (2000) argue that, to the extent that such economic concerns are important to employees, it is primarily because they serve identity-based functions—for example, by connoting pride, status, and respect (a conclusion also supported by analysis of the work behavior of casual workers; Veenstra, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2004).

In sum, then, it appears that while costs, benefits, prospects, exchange, and so forth are all important *features* of group and organizational life, these features are not necessarily the prime movers that they are commonly supposed to be. In part, this is because what 'counts' as a cost, a benefit, a fair exchange, a valued resource, or even self-interest, cannot be established independently of the contextualized social identities which give these constructs meaning. When making judgements of costs, benefits, and so on, people's social identities thus determine (among other things) what the relevant entities to be compared are, which frame of reference should be used to interpret differential outcomes, and what signifies a self-relevant cost or benefit (Platow, O'Connell, Shave, & Hanning, 1995; Platow, Reid, & Andrew, 1998). More generally, though, such calculus is of secondary importance because—unlike the psycho-structural processes that give rise to social identity—an abstracted appreciation of costs and benefits is of little use in helping individuals to deal appropriately with the complex and variable exigencies of group and organizational life that they routinely confront.

Beyond Metaphor

The controversies discussed in the previous four sections have formed a backdrop to much of the last 20 or so years of social and organizational research that has been informed by a social identity perspective. In contrast, this section deals with a debate that has arisen much more recently and which has thus far been confined specifically to the topic of organizational identity. This debate has been spearheaded by Cornelissen (2002a, b) and questions the heuristic status of organizational identity *as a metaphor* for understanding organizational life. In other words, the critique reflects upon and challenges the idea that organizational identity might provide a useful way of conceptualizing organizations, as it posits that social identity is merely used as a figure of speech.

Cornelissen's first contention is that the metaphor of organizational identity has been accepted uncritically and that, on closer inspection, its

credentials are rather suspect. His second argument is that when researchers work with the metaphor they run into the 'logical impasse' that arises from the dissimilarity 'between the individual-level construct of identity and the collective-level construct of organization' (Cornelissen, 2002a, pp. 264, 266). From a sociological perspective, Gioia, Schultz, & Corley (2002a, b) mount a spirited defence of organizational identity as an analytic construct. Far from being barren and stale, they argue that it is proving extremely useful—not least because it is 'part of the lay organizational vocabulary' (Gioia et al., 2002a, p. 270) that organizational members themselves use to describe both their own experience and features of the organizational world around them. In response to Cornelissen's (2002a) second point, they note that there is no necessary equivalence between individual and collective identity and that, on the contrary, researchers have begun to identify ways in which the structure and content of these is markedly different (e.g., Gioia, 1998; Weick & Roberts, 1993).

Yet, going beyond this sociological response, a *social psychological* perspective suggests that organizational identity is more than just a metaphor (Haslam, Postmes et al., 2003). Psychologically, then, there is considerable value in using the term in a non-metaphorical way to refer to psychological and social *realities*—realities associated with the construct's status as an organizational motivator and product (e.g., see pp. 68–72 below). And, while there is a qualitative difference between individual (personal) identity and organizational identity, there is also much to be gained from attempts to spell out *the psychological basis of this difference* along the lines of Tajfel's (1978) and Turner's (1982) treatments (see Figure 2.2). When one does investigate the psychology of this difference, the construct of organizational identity can be seen to be valuable *precisely because* it allows researchers to resolve the problem identified by Cornelissen (2002a) concerning the impasse between individual and collective levels of analysis (Turner & Oakes, 1986). Entering into this analysis also allows us to understand the distinct *consequences* of the discontinuity between personal and social (organizational) identity.

Thus, along the lines of Turner's (1982) analysis, we can see that organizational identity relates to stereotypic attributes of an organization that are conferred upon it by those for whom the organization is relevant and meaningful. Thinking about organizational identities *as stereotypes* is helpful for a range of reasons, not least because it allows us to draw on the large body of research that pertains to this topic (e.g., in social psychology; McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2002; Oakes et al., 1994; Spears, Oakes, Ellemers, & Haslam, 1997). Three features of stereotypes that are particularly relevant to the present chapter are, first, that they are widely shared within particular social groups and communities (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, Reynolds et al., 1998; Tajfel, 1981a, b); second, that they provide a basis for socially coordinated action (Reicher, 1982; Sherif, 1966); and, third, that while they are

often characterized by stability over time they are also context-dependent and potentially fluid (Haslam & Turner, 1992).

In relation to the second of these points, a significant feature of organizational identities, as with stereotypes, is that they are used not only to describe others but also to describe ourselves and to inform our own behavior. In this sense, organizational identity overlaps with conceptualizations of organizational culture (see also Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ellemers, 2003; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000) in serving as a potential source of norms and values that guide people's behavior toward both ingroup and outgroup members. However, in addition to offering scope to define the *content* of what we are, organizational (or social) identification also captures the extent to which people define themselves as members of a particular organization (or group). That is, identity *strength* (organizational/social identification) indicates whether people engage in a process of *self-stereotyping* whereby their behavior is oriented toward, and structured by, the content of that organization's (or group's) defining characteristics, norms, and values, resulting in the internalization of a particular organizational (or social) identity.

Critically, too, once a particular organizational identity has become salient for a particular group of people and once particular norms and values have come to define it, this should impact not just on the psychology of individuals but it should also help to translate that psychology into collective products—plans and visions, goods and services, organizations and institutions. As noted above, this is because, as a form of social identity, shared organizational identity is a basis not only for people to perceive and interpret their world in similar ways, but also for processes of social influence which allow them to coordinate their behavior in ways that lead to concerted social action and collective products (Haslam, 2001; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Turner, 1991).

In exactly this way, shared organizational identity can be seen to be the basis for forms of 'collective mind' akin to those observed in Weick and Roberts's influential research into the interrelated activities of flight deck crews (1993). Ultimately, the power and utility of organizational identity as an analytic construct—like that of social identity more generally—derives from the fact that it is an embodiment of the dialectical relationship between socially structured individual psychology, on the one hand, and collective organizational products, on the other. Recognizing that individual psychology is socially mediated means that psychological analysis need not be reductionistic in the way that Cornelissen (2002a) implies. At the same time, the fact that collective products are always underpinned and made possible by individual psychology means that organizational analysis does not have to avoid psychology in order to be valid.

In conclusion, then, it is correct to assert that, as metaphors, social and organizational identity have limited value. But it is wrong to conclude that this is all they are or can be. The primary value and force of all forms of social

identity (organizational, departmental, team-based, and so on) arises from the fact that they are psychologically and socially *real*. Membership in groups and organizations shapes our sense of who we are, and our sense of who we are (and who we are not) is the foundation for the structures and achievements of the social and organizational world. Accordingly, social identity should be understood and investigated primarily as a fact of social and organizational life rather than as a figure of speech (Haslam, Postmes et al., 2003).

SOCIAL IDENTITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Social Identity as a Contextual Product

One of the key differences between an identity-based definition of the group and more traditional sociological definitions is that in the former case the group itself—together with the strength and nature of individuals' attachment to it—is assumed to be context-dependent rather than in any sense given (e.g., demographically). For example, whether and how a woman acts in terms of a gender-defined identity in an organization depends not simply on her possession of 'objective' physical, psychological, or behavioral characteristics but also on how that social category is comparatively and normatively defined, whether it has prior meaning, and on the individual's perceived prototypicality in relation to a particular category definition. Being 'a woman' is thus likely to mean something different in a 'traditional' organization where women typically occupy junior positions and struggle to gain promotion, and where feminism is frowned upon, than it does in a more progressive organization (Ellemers, van den Heuvel, de Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004; Fajak & Haslam, 1998; Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991; Schmitt, Ellemers, & Branscombe, 2003).

For example, it follows from social identity theory that in the traditional organization women are more likely to embrace strategies of social creativity which lead them to self-enhance by defining themselves positively on non-status-defining attributes (e.g., sociability, compliance) than to pursue strategies of social change which bring them into competition with men on status-defining dimensions (e.g., for pay). It also follows from self-categorization theory that in the traditional organization women who do compete with men (or who pursue strategies of personal mobility) would tend to be relatively aprototypical and, hence, should be likely (a) to be seen as less 'womanly' (Hopkins, 1996), (b) to receive less support from other women, and (c) to have less influence over them (Ellemers, van den Heuvel et al., 2004).

Following on from this point, it can be seen that there are no inherent, stable definitions of social categories (whether ingroups or outgroups) and no predefined, universal identities in terms of which a person will define themselves. This point is discussed by Wharton (1992) in an extended treatment

of the way in which employees' self-definition in terms of gender and 'race' can change across different workplace settings (see also Gioia et al., 2000; Jackson, 1992; Ridgeway, 1991). Related evidence also emerges from programmatic work conducted by Levine and his colleagues which shows how social context can change the meaning of specific events for particular social identities. This work relates to issues of stress and health (for a discussion see Haslam, 2004) and shows how contextual changes in identity definition impact upon the perceived severity of particular stressors and symptoms. In an illustrative study, Levine (1999) presented female office secretaries with scenarios in which a particular constellation of symptoms was described. Pre-testing had established that some of the symptoms were particularly relevant to a secretarial identity because they impacted on secretarial work (restricted manual dexterity, back pain, flu), and some were particularly relevant to a gender identity because they affected physical appearance (a scar on the face, a broken nose). The participants' task was to rate how distressing they would find each of these scenarios and how much each would adversely affect their lives. Significantly, though, before doing this, gender was made salient for half of the participants by telling them that the researchers were interested in comparing the responses of men and women, while the other half had their secretarial identity made salient by telling them that the researchers were interested in the responses of different professional groups. As predicted, the extent to which particular symptoms were seen as a cause for concern depended on the extent that they were threatening to the particular social identity that the experimenter had made salient. So, for example, when their identity as secretaries was salient, women saw symptoms relevant to gender identity as reasonably trivial. However, when their gender was salient, women perceived these same scenarios to be much more distressing, but saw symptoms related to secretarial work as more trivial.

Levine (1999) developed these arguments by elaborating upon the context-sensitivity of the self-categorization processes at work in symptom appraisal. In a subsequent study, male rugby players evaluated the seriousness of a range of illness scenarios under conditions where their identity as males was made salient. However, the contextual definition of this identity was varied by indicating that responses were being compared with those of either women or 'new-age' men. Levine (1999) reasoned that the rugby players' understanding of what it means to be male—and hence what constitutes a male-related stressor—would vary in these two contexts. In particular, he predicted that when they were compared with new-age men, the rugby players would perceive their 'traditional' male identity to be under threat and that, in order to re-establish a distinct identity, they would here be particularly keen to emphasize their own masculinity by downplaying the seriousness of emotional threats (a violent temper, depression) and threats to physical attractiveness (a facial scar, a burn on the hand). The results confirmed these predictions. In this, the findings suggest not only that salient

group memberships provide a basis for assessing the significance of particular events but that this assessment also depends on features of social context which imbue those group memberships with a particular meaning. When thinking of themselves in terms of social identity, people interpret the world (e.g., the capacity of events to threaten the self) in relation to that identity, but in line with general self-categorization principles (e.g., Haslam & Turner, 1992; Turner, 1985), the nature of that identity itself depends on features of comparative and normative context.

Some more recent organizational work that is consistent with these arguments is reported by Van Dick and colleagues (Van Dick et al., in press). In this, schoolteachers' identification with different entities (their current school, their profession, their own career) together with their willingness to engage in acts of organizational citizenship on behalf of their school was assessed in a range of conditions in which these different identities were made salient by means of manipulations of comparative fit. A teacher's school identity was made salient by indicating that the researchers were comparing the organizational citizenship of teachers between schools; a teacher's professional identity was made salient by indicating that they were comparing the responses of teachers with kindergarden educators; personal identity was made salient by indicating that the study was looking at individual differences between teachers. As predicted, these manipulations led to changes in the extent to which the teachers defined themselves in terms of a specific social identity and also affected their willingness to engage in school-based organizational citizenship. School identification was highest in a comparative context in which schools were compared and statistical analysis also confirmed that increases in citizenship were mediated by contextually induced increases in the salience of school identity.

Along similar lines, research by Haslam, Powell, and Turner (2000) has also shown that changes to normative context impact on employees' levels of organizational identification and affect their willingness to engage in citizenship acts on behalf of that organization. In this research, staff in a geological institute completed a questionnaire which either did or did not refer to the high status and achievements of that organization. This manipulation was intended to increase the normative fit of organizational identity and, hence, to increase willingness to act in the interests of that organization. These predictions were confirmed and accord with similar findings reported by Tyler and his colleagues (e.g., Tyler, 1999) in which an increased capacity to feel pride in an organization translates into higher organizational identification and enhanced citizenship.

Whether or not people internalize and act in terms of a given social identity thus depends critically on features of normative and comparative context. Moreover, as Levine's work suggests, these same factors also affect the content and meaning of that identity, so that context affects not just how much people identify, but also *what they are identifying with*. Along these lines,

research by Doosje, Haslam, Spears, Oakes, and Koomen (1998) has shown that psychologists define themselves very differently when they compare themselves with physicists rather than with dramatists, or within a science rather than an arts community (Spears, Doosje et al., 1997). In comparison with dramatists, they see themselves as more scientific; in comparison with physicists, they see themselves as more artistic (Van Rijswijk, Haslam, & Ellemers, in press).

This point has clear relevance for the conceptualization of *organizational culture* and of the way in which this informs employees' behavior. Traditionally, culture has tended to be understood as representing relatively stable work-related values (Hofstede, 1980; Schein, 1990) and, hence, to be amenable to relatively objective quantification (e.g., O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Rousseau, 1990). However, principles of self-categorization theory imply that, while history will contribute to patterns of accessibility that give culture an enduring and stable quality, this—like organizational identity itself—should also be potentially fluid and mutable. As contexts change, employees and their organization as a whole should be able to redefine both what they are 'about' and where they are going (see also Ashkanasy & Jackson, 2002; Gioia et al., 2000). This point is confirmed in research conducted by Nauta and Sanders (2001) among Dutch manufacturing companies. Here the stated goals of manufacturing, planning, and marketing departments (together with their employees' perceptions of other departments' goals and of the degree to which different departments were contributing to organizational goals) changed dramatically as a function of changes in the comparative context, which served to redefine the meaning of employees' salient social identities. For example, employees in the planning department perceived their goals to be closer to those of the manufacturing department (e.g., to be efficient) when comparing themselves with the marketing department, but closer to those of marketing (e.g., to deliver service reliably and quickly) when comparing themselves with manufacturing.

Furthermore, just as context defines content, so too it impacts on the capacity of particular exemplars of a category (e.g., individuals, ideas, goals) to represent, and be perceived to represent, that content (Turner, 1987). This point is most germane to the analysis of *leadership* (e.g., see Duck & Fielding, 1999, 2003; Ellemers, Van den Heuvel et al., in press; Haslam, 2001; Jetten, Duck, Terry, & O'Brien, 2002; Turner & Haslam, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Here a large and rapidly expanding body of research has challenged the view that particular individuals are inherently better suited to offices of leadership by virtue of their possession of specific attributes that can be defined and measured independently of context (e.g., charisma; Haslam & Platow, 2001b), or that leadership is determined by a simple matching of specific individuals (or 'leader prototypes'; Lord & Maher, 1991) with specific contexts, as suggested by contingency theories (e.g., after Fiedler, 1964, 1978). Instead, research has

supported the idea, derived from self-categorization theory, that a person's capacity to lead (and to be seen to display leadership) varies with the nature of their followers, as a function of their capacity to represent a contextually defined social identity (Turner, 1991).

Consistent with this view, programmatic research by Platow and colleagues (e.g., Haslam & Platow, 2001a; Platow, Hoar, Reid, Harley, & Morrison, 1997; Platow et al., 1998; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001) has shown that group members' willingness to support and be influenced by a leader varies as a function of changes to comparative context. In particular, in intragroup contexts group members favor leaders who are distributively fair and treat ingroup members equally, but in intergroup contexts they favor leaders whose behavior (e.g., their treatment of ingroup and outgroup members) helps to differentiate the ingroup positively from the comparison outgroup. Such findings are predicted by both social identity and self-categorization principles as they show that leadership is contingent (a) on a person's capacity to contribute to the positive distinctiveness of a social identity that they share with followers and (b) on their context-determined prototypicality with respect to that identity.

In this and other work, a key contribution of the social identity approach has been to question static, taxonomic approaches which see classification and specification of particular organizational features as the primary path to theoretical and practical understanding. Above all, it does this by revealing the capacity for comparative and normative factors to redefine the nature and meaning both (a) of particular organizational properties and structures, and (b) of individuals' psychological orientations toward them. Furthermore, such redefinition has *qualitative*, not just quantitative, implications. This is because social identities are emergent higher-order products that are *transformed* by context, rather than merely aggregated from it (Turner & Oakes, 1986). This means that relevant psychological states and processes (e.g., leadership, culture, gender) cannot be discovered within the disaggregated parts of wholes in the manner that classical organizational approaches suggest. Rather, these identity-based processes need to be understood, and studied, as irreducibly socio-contextual. Organizational contexts do not merely provide milieus within which social identity operates, they also contribute to the creation of *new* identities, just as those identities themselves motivate the creation of new organizational contexts (Fiol & O'Connor, 2002; Gioia et al., 2000). This dynamic is central to organizational psychology and, moreover, is a basic source of organizational vitality and adaptiveness.

Social Identity as a Strategic Response to Organizational Context

In the previous section we looked at social identity as a contextual product and focused on the *cognitive* bases for identification—examining the factors that lead to a specific work-related identity becoming salient, and showing

that different features of the same social identity can come to define that self-category in different contexts. In this section we will consider more *strategic* considerations that lead people to define themselves as representative (proto-typical) of certain social or organizational identities rather than others, and the motivational bases for presenting the content of their social identity in a particular way. The central argument in this section is that, aside from cognitive salience effects, expressions of identity and signs of identification may also stem from people's attempts to actively *negotiate* their identity to fit their preferred self-views (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002, 2003; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002).

Organizational research suggests that these *identity management* strategies can also be witnessed in work settings. A key assumption underlying social identity theory—namely, that people prefer to associate the self with those groups that are positively distinct from others—has been applied to work contexts by Dutton et al. (1994). They argue that a successful organization is more attractive for its employees as it is more likely to provide them with a distinctive self-concept that enhances self-esteem. This is supported by re-search showing that the corporate performance and reputation of a given firm determines its attractiveness for employees (Turban & Greening, 1997). Likewise, a recent study among physicians working with different healthcare systems (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002) revealed that these physicians' identification with a particular healthcare system depended on the perceived attractiveness and external image of that system. In turn, identification with a system predicted physicians' displays of cooperative behavior toward it. Thus, the results of these studies consistently indicate that, in work contexts too, the willingness to associate the self with a particular organizational constituency is enhanced the more opportunities it affords for establishing a positive social identity (see also Peteraf & Shanley, 1997).

As we have indicated in our description of the interpersonal–intergroup continuum and its consequences for cognition and behavior, in situations where one's group *cannot* be distinguished positively from others, people try to fulfill the desire to establish a positive social identity in alternative ways. Furthermore, social identity theory posits that the particular strategies people pursue (individual mobility, social creativity, or social change) depend on the structural characteristics of the intergroup situation, such as the permeability of group boundaries, and the security of group status (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, the strategic behavior people display in order to cope with a threatened (or less than ideal) social identity is jointly determined by the desire, on the one hand, to associate the self with a subjectively valued group (or to establish the value of a group that already includes the self), and, on the other hand, by situational features that con-strain the ways in which the present situation is subject to objective changes or cognitive redefinitions. Together, these desires, perceived possibilities, and restrictions determine whether people will tend to *dissociate* the self

from a particular group (as in social mobility), or *emphasize* their identity as group members by searching for alternative ways to achieve positive distinctiveness for the group (social creativity) or by working together with others to achieve collective identity improvement (social change).

Looking at work-related situations in which people experience some form of threat to positive social identity, there is evidence for the use of all three of the above identity management strategies. *First*, organizational researchers have observed cognitive redefinitions of comparative organizational features that are consistent with social identity notions of *social creativity*. For instance, Elsbach and Kramer (1996) conducted a study among the faculty of eight 'top-20' business schools which examined how these academics responded to rankings that challenged their beliefs about the relative standing of their school. The researchers found that the implied identity threat resulted in the academics selectively focusing on comparative categories (e.g., making regional instead of national comparisons) and dimensions (e.g., level or basis of funding) that would yield the school a favorable identity. Likewise, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) investigated the ways in which people who do 'dirty work' (e.g., garbage collectors, dog catchers, or exotic dancers) respond to the challenge this poses for their work-based identity. They observed that these workers cope by defining their work along those dimensions that convey a positive rather than a negative image (e.g., having flexible hours, working outdoors, or meeting new people). Thus, use of these social creativity strategies allowed workers to maintain identification with their school or profession, by redefining the implications of this identity. In a similar vein, Lupton (2000) describes how men who do 'women's work' tend to reconstruct the nature of their occupation, to bring it more in line with their gender identity.

Second, there are studies that provide evidence of intergroup competition and attempts at *social change* with respect to work-related outcomes. In these, people identify with groups whose current outcomes they do not find acceptable. For instance, union activity can be seen as a form of social competition which aims to collectively improve employee conditions or other work outcomes (e.g., Veenstra & Haslam, 2000), instead of trying to escape these individually (e.g., by crossing a picket line ('scabbing') or leaving the organization). Participation in union activities has been observed mainly among those who strongly identify with the union and its goals, and who believe that existing work conditions can be improved by such action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). This is consistent with the notion that social change is a *group*-level identity management strategy that is pursued when the current relations between the group are perceived to be illegitimate and/or unstable.

Additional empirical evidence indicates that the prospect of collective position improvement is a crucial factor in this process, as this alleviates the threat implied in having low group status and thus can induce members of low-status groups to stick together and pursue collective identity

improvement. In a recent study on the effects of performance differences in task teams (Scheepers & Ellemers, in press), members of a team that performed worse than other teams initially showed increased blood pressure, which is a physiological indicator that they experienced threat as a result of their team's inferior performance. However, physiological signs of threat were reduced when the teams could participate in a follow-up task, which allowed them an opportunity to change their collective status for the better. The reverse pattern was observed among members of teams that had initially performed relatively well; they experienced *more* threat after they were informed that the relative performance of the groups could change in a second task, which in their case implied a possible *loss* of relative status. Thus, this study clearly indicates that it is not just the current status of the group *per se* that determines whether people find it attractive or threatening to be part of the group. The *stability* of intergroup differences—and the opportunities for future *changes* in the standing of the group that are perceived as a result—are also crucial determinants of such perceptions.

Further research, examining how differences in intergroup standing affect group goals and collective effort, confirms that when the situation suggests that the group's performance can be improved, team members who identify strongly with their group tend to set higher collective goals, which in turn actually help them to achieve a superior group performance (Ouwerkerk, De Gilder, & De Vries, 2000; Ouwerkerk et al., 1999). Conversely, when the relative standing of the group seems secure (e.g., because over time one's own team has *consistently* outperformed other teams), this elicits satisfaction with collective achievements resulting in a sense of complacency and lack of effort on the group task (Ouwerkerk & Ellemers, 2002). In sum, in situations where collective identity improvement seems feasible, social identification is maintained while people actively try to improve their collective identity.

When we turn to the strategy of *individual mobility* in work settings, at the organizational level there is converging evidence that employee turnover tends to increase as the public image of the organization for which people work becomes less favorable (e.g., Meyer & Allen, 1997; see also Mael & Ashforth, 1992). This is consistent with the notion that the pursuit of individual identity improvement leads people to distance the self from undesirable groups. However, when we further examine the strategic ways in which people present their identity in work-related contexts, it becomes clear that, even when an actual change of group affiliation (as in the case of organizational turnover) is not possible, people can and do express a preference for being considered in terms of certain group memberships rather than others. Such a pattern is displayed by specific groups of workers who have reason to believe that they will be regarded as less suitable or less successful employees, as a consequence of the fact that they belong to social categories that are devalued in a work context. For example, this is found among women and members of ethnic minorities who emphasize or

de-emphasize group-prototypical traits (e.g., sociability, reliability), depending on how members of their group are perceived in a specific work setting (Schmitt, Branscombe et al., 2003).

This general phenomenon of identity negotiation is illustrated by evidence that the gender identity of female workers—that is, the extent to which they describe themselves as representative of their gender group and are inclined to display behaviors that are characteristic for their gender group—tends to vary across situations, depending, for instance, on the proportional representation of women in the upper echelons of the organization in question (Ely, 1994). For instance, in organizations where it is exceptional for women to obtain the most prestigious jobs, those women who aim for a successful career tend to emphasize how they differ from other women. That is, they present themselves in terms of stereotypically *masculine* traits while they continue to perceive other women in the organization as stereotypically feminine (Ellemers, 2001a; Ellemers, Van den Heuvel et al., 2004).

However, in line with social identity reasoning, individual-level and group-level strategies involve a fundamentally different definition of self (i.e., in individual terms or in group terms, respectively). As a result, an important consequence of the use of individual mobility strategies—for instance, where women try to advance by acting like 'one of the boys' (Fiske & Glick, 1995)—is that they are less likely to align with other women in order to engage in collective action designed to improve the treatment of women in general (e.g., by promoting other women or endorsing affirmative action schemes; Fajak & Haslam, 1998; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988; for a review, see Schmitt, Ellemers et al., 2003). Work with members of ethnic minorities reveals similar processes at play (James, 1995, 1997; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002). The operation of this mechanism can be seen to contribute to the fact that—despite some notable examples of individual success—women and ethnic minorities remain generally disadvantaged in the workplace (Ryan & Haslam, in press).

The countervailing mechanisms involved in the pursuit of individual mobility and social change were recently demonstrated in a simulated prison experiment conducted by Haslam and Reicher (2002, in press). Designed as a field test of social identity theory, participants in the study were randomly assigned to groups as prisoners or guards. In the first phase of the study participants were told that individual prisoners could be promoted to guards (i.e., group boundaries were permeable). As predicted, here the prisoners worked individually to try to improve their personal situation (e.g., by vying for promotion), and this led them to display citizenship toward the prison organization and to comply with the rules set by the guards. However, after promotion was ruled out, the prisoners' sense of collective identity increased and, again as predicted, this encouraged them to work together to resist and challenge the guards' authority and undermine prison rules. Moreover, the qualitative (observational) and quantitative (psychometric,

physiological) observations which support this analysis (see Haslam & Reicher, 2002; Reicher & Haslam, 2003) illustrate in a relatively novel and vivid way how the conditions that promote individual mobility prevent attempts at social change and vice versa.

While the research summarized above attests to the fact that identity management strategies—and the changes in social identity expression that accompany the use of these strategies—are actually manifest in work settings in the ways predicted by social identity theory, it also reminds us that it is people's *belief systems* about the properties of the situation, rather than the situation's objective features, that determine preferences for certain strategies over others. That is, whether or not people try to improve their performance individually or as a group not only depends on whether or not individual or group advancement is *objectively* possible, but also on whether they see this as *subjectively* feasible or even desirable (Ellemers, Spears et al., 1997). For instance, a recent study (Barreto, Ellemers et al., 2004) showed that in a job qualification procedure, participants perceived and responded very differently to identical individual advancement opportunities depending on their social identity and the identity-based prospects of success at the task. Specifically, whereas men who participated in a competitive job selection procedure thought they had a realistic chance of success and performed well on the focal task, female participants in this same situation rated their chances of being selected as much lower, and actually performed less well on the critical intelligence test. Thus, while the application of social identity reasoning might seem to suggest that individual performance and achieve-ment can be encouraged by giving people the opportunity to advance as individuals, this research reminds us that, if those people continue to perceive themselves in terms of their group-based identity, very different outcomes will materialize.

However, even when individuals seem more at liberty to negotiate their social identity (e.g., because their group membership is not immediately visible to others), this does not necessarily imply that individual mobility is the ideal strategy. For instance, those who try to escape the negative implica-tions of their group membership by hiding their true identity in a work setting (e.g., their sexual or political preference, or the fact that they have some physical or mental disability), suffer from psychological distress and lowered well-being due to their fear of exposure (Frable, Platt, & Hoey, 1998; Goffman, 1963). In fact, they may not even be able to reap the expected benefits from their use of this strategy, as the cognitive effort of suppressing the devalued identity tends to make it even more salient (Lane & Wegner, 1995; Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994; Smart & Wegner, 1999, 2000; Wegner & Gold, 1995). They can also expect increased derogation from other ingroup members if their status as imposters is discovered (Hornsey & Jetten, 2003). As a result, recent research indicates that the very attempt to hide one's social identity from others in a collaborative

performance situation can backfire as it results in an *increased* perception of the self in terms of the devalued identity, and in *lowered* self-confidence in relation to the task at hand (Barreto, Ellemers, & Banal, 2003).

In this section, we have reviewed research showing that different identity management strategies can be observed in work settings and that these strategies are observed under the conditions predicted by social identity theory. In particular, people actively negotiate their identity, constrained by the opportunities that the situation affords. In addition to group-level strategies (social competition when group statuses are insecure and social creativity when they are secure), we have seen that individual workers tend to associate with groups, organizations, or workteams that are successful. They do this by complying with organizational norms, improving their individual performance, and de-emphasizing those traits or behaviors that are characteristic for their membership in groups which are devalued in the workplace.

At first sight, and in line with meritocratic ideals, individual mobility strategies might appear to offer the most attractive prospects for optimizing career success. However, as we have seen, this strategy has some clear draw-backs. *First*, it is important to note that the career success of a small number of (token) group representatives will not improve (and may even erode) the position of the group as a whole and, thus, can undermine attempts to bring about much-needed social and organizational change (e.g., to redress sexism). *Second*, we should keep in mind that people are not always able or willing to forsake traits or behaviors that characterize their group-based identity—and it may be ethically inappropriate to expect them to do so. *Third*, even when individual workers want to throw off or hide their social identity, their attempts to do so will not always be successful. Finally, *fourth*, if their attempt to pass into the high-status group is unsuccessful, they are likely to be shunned and resented by members of their former ingroup, and so will suffer the anguish of dual rejection (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998).

Social Identity as a Motivator of Organizational Behavior

Having examined the contextual features that can lead people in work situations to identify at the collective rather than the individual level, this section considers the likely implications of social identification for motivated behavior in work situations. In the I/O literature, theories of work motivation aim to understand (a) which conditions encourage people to invest behavioral energy in their work (*energize*), (b) which activities they are likely to focus their efforts on (*direction*), and (c) what makes them persevere in such efforts over time (*persistence*; Pinder, 1984, 1998; see also Steers, Porter, & Bigley, 1996). To date, though, theory and research on work motivation have focused mainly on the motivational processes underlying the behavior of individual workers as *separate agents*, examining the individual needs that people may

have, their own independent goals and expectations, or the personal outcomes they find rewarding (e.g., Donovan, 2002; Pinder, 1984, 1998; see Ellemers et al., 2004 for a more extensive discussion of this issue). For instance, whereas the influential equity approach explicitly focuses on the social nature of work motivation, it has mainly addressed the possibility that equity considerations derive from *interpersonal* comparisons (Donovan, 2002; Mowday, 1979).

However, it has been acknowledged that this approach only applies to a certain class of work situations, while in many cases it remains unclear how justice evaluations develop (Gilliland & Chan, 2002). Notably, the pursuit of collective (organizational) goals or joint (team) outcomes has not constituted a systematic topic of research in work motivation (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999) and, to the extent that this has been the case, the motivation to engage in collaborative efforts has been considered largely in terms of interdependence or instrumental exchange (see Tyler, 1999, for a similar critique). As we have argued previously, this emphasis on people's personal self-interest as the primary driver of work behavior is empirically limited, not least because it fails to provide a satisfactory explanatory account for observations of the 'selfless' behavior that people often display in work contexts (see Ghoshal & Bruch, 2003 for a similar critique).

Thus, to be able to understand these work situations, the challenge in the area of work motivation is to understand how people are *energized* to engage in behaviors that are significant primarily at a collective level, such as 'service provision' or organizational citizenship behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Organ, 1988), how they *direct* their activities toward individual as well as collective goals, in particular when these seem incompatible (e.g., when the pressure to meet individual targets prevents people from helping their colleagues), and how they *sustain* behavioral effort on behalf of the collective when the individual benefits of doing this are unclear (e.g., because of organizational changes, or insecure job prospects; see also Meyer & Allen, 1997; Veenstra et al., 2004). We argue that people's work-related social identity, because it provides a self-conception in collective terms, *can* energize people to exert themselves on behalf of the group, facilitate the direction of efforts toward collective (instead of individual) outcomes, and help workers to sustain their loyalty to the team or organization through times in which this is not individually rewarding. The following subsections examine the implications of this reasoning for the analysis of teamwork and group performance, and for the analysis of communication as it relates to motivated behavior in organizations.

Group performance

A classical concern in the theory and practice of teamwork and group performance has been to determine when the motivation and performance of a

group is *less* than could be expected on the basis of the abilities of the individual workers, i.e., 'social loafing' (Karau & Williams, 1993), and under what circumstances the whole is *more* effective than the sum of its parts ('social laboring'; see also Haslam, 2001). The majority of the work in this area has focused on the danger of so-called *motivation losses* in groups (Steiner, 1972), aiming to establish means to avoid or minimize their occurrence. Based on the assumption that people who work on a collective task feel less individually accountable for their efforts than when they perform the same task individually, it is argued that people generally tend to work less hard on group tasks than on individual tasks (Kravitz & Martin, 1986). Accordingly, typical solutions to the social loafing problem involve measures that emphasize how the individual may benefit from the group's performance—for instance, by making the contributions of individual team members more visible, or by showing how the achievement of group goals may help obtain personally valued outcomes (Karau & Williams, 1997).

When people primarily conceive of themselves as separate individuals, they can only be expected to direct their efforts toward the achievement of collective goals when this affects their individual outcomes (e.g., because they fear they may be sanctioned for failing to exert themselves on behalf of the group). Under such circumstances, individual accountability can also increase performance with respect to collective goals. However, research by Barreto and Ellemers (2001; see also Jetten, Branscombe, Spears, & McKimmie, 2003) suggests that such measures have only limited value. That is, people who identify as separate individuals can be induced to work for the group as long as they have to account for their efforts in public, but fail to do so when working under more private conditions. Furthermore, while increased individual accountability can help avoid motivational losses in groups, it does not inform us of the possible *gains* that may be achieved from teamwork. In fact, to the extent that the individuation of team members takes away from the 'groupiness' of the team, measures taken to avoid motivational losses might even preclude processes that would achieve synergy through collaboration (i.e., where 'two plus two equals five').

While the avoidance of motivational losses (rather than the promotion of motivation gains) is the best possible outcome in cases where people do not feel emotionally involved with the group, we argue that *increased* motivation and performance ('social laboring') can be achieved in groups where people primarily see themselves in terms of their workteam or organization. The same Barreto and Ellemers study that showed how people who define the self at the individual level make their efforts contingent on the likelihood that they will be personally sanctioned for failing to show the desired behavior, also revealed that those who defined themselves in terms of social identity consistently worked for the group regardless of whether or not their behavior was subject to scrutiny from others. This suggests that a self-definition in collective terms leads people to internalize group goals as intrinsically

motivating, while self-definition as a separate individual implies that displays of group-oriented behavior depend on the presence or absence of external pressure to do so (in this case, public accountability; see also Barreto & Ellemers, 2002, 2003). Consistent with this notion, research has revealed that groups of close friends or teammates display less social loafing than groups comprising strangers or mere acquaintances (Williams, Karau, & Bourgeois, 1993). This appears to be a product of the higher levels of commitment that are observed in the friendship groups (Jehn & Shah, 1997). Such evidence implies that—while traditional remedies for social loafing may be effective when workers collaborate with each other as separate individuals—measures that enhance the salience of a collective identity should provide a more effective way of motivating people to achieve collective goals and optimize group performance (see also Ellemers, 2001b; Tyler & Blader, 2000; van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003).

While we have argued that the awareness of a shared identity may direct group members' efforts toward the achievement of collective goals, it is important to note that this will not *necessarily* result in greater group productivity. When group members establish their collective identity by setting distinct goals for the group, this not only fosters their sense of identification with the group, but also increases their efforts to achieve these particular group goals (see Wegge & Haslam, 2003). However, depending on the content of these goals, systematic underperformance or excessive absence can also be the result, which would seem undesirable from a managerial point of view (as in the case of so-called 'soldiering' where a group contrives collectively to underperform; Taylor, 1911; see also Gellatly & Luchak, 1998). Thus, a counter-intuitive consequence of this process is that enhanced group identification can even increase the amount of effort directed at the achievement of *individual* goals when distinctive group norms prescribe individualistic behavior (Barreto & Ellemers, 2001)—for instance, when organizational culture emphasizes individual competitiveness.

Communication

As well as looking at motivation *per se*, there is also value in examining the way that social identity and self-categorization processes impact upon the *communication processes* in work settings that help shape work-related behavior. Following arguments developed in the first section of this review, we argue that identity-based expectations determine the interpretation and effectiveness of communication within and between groups (e.g., Haslam, 2001; Irmer, 2004; Postmes, 2003; Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, in press). As has been demonstrated more generally in the context of intergroup relations, people tend to interpret the same behavior differently depending on

whether it is performed by an ingroup or an outgroup member. That is, the general tendency to hold a more positive view of ingroup members than of outgroup members results in consistent and predictable patterns of attributions for the performance of ingroup and outgroup members. For instance, when an ingroup member is seen to fail at a task, this is attributed to bad luck, whereas the same performance shown by an outgroup member is taken as indicating a lack of competence (Hewstone, 1990; Pettigrew, 1979).

This differential interpretation of the behavior of ingroup and outgroup members (which depends, *inter alia*, on previously held expectations about these groups) also emerges in the way people *communicate* about the behavior of others, as it is reflected in the linguistic terms they choose to convey their behavioral observations to others (Maass & Arcuri, 1996; Maass, Salvi, Arcuri, & Semin, 1989). For instance, people tend to describe desirable behavior in more abstract terms when it is displayed by an ingroup member ('she is helpful') rather than an outgroup member ('she got him the file he wanted'), while the reverse is true in the case of undesirable behaviors displayed by ingroup ('he shouted at his secretary') and outgroup ('he is aggressive') members. Importantly, programmatic research exploring these ideas has demonstrated, *first*, that people are usually unaware that their communications are biased in this way, and, *second*, that such differently worded messages can evoke a completely different impression of the person in question, even though the behavior it relates to is held constant (see Wigboldus, Spears, & Semin, 1999 for an overview).

Moreover, not only do people *send* different messages about ingroup and outgroup members, there is also evidence that recipients *interpret* work-related communications differently depending on whether or not they share the same identity. This not only affects the impressions people hold of their co-workers, but in turn also affects their own behavior and the eventual success or failure of collaborative performance.

The latter point can be illustrated by two research examples. In the first, Bruins, Ellemers, and De Gilder (1999) used an experimental set-up to examine the motivational consequences of communication in a context where people's task decisions could be overruled by others. Specifically, participants working on a stock-trading exercise were given messages from a supervisor who, in different conditions, overruled their trading decisions either rarely (20% of the time) or frequently (60% of the time). As expected, results showed that people generally disliked being overruled, and tended to respond more negatively than in cases where the supervisor generally approved of their decisions. However, and more relevant to our present discussion, such responses also depended on whether or not participants thought they shared the same social identity with the supervisor. More specifically, those who received the message that their decisions were over-ruled by an ingroup supervisor attributed this to external pressures on the

other person. As a result, under these conditions, people maintained a cooperative attitude toward the supervisor, and invested effort helping him/her on a subsequent task. In contrast, when the message that one's decisions were overruled was conveyed from an outgroup supervisor this decision was explained with reference to that person's group membership. Consequently, when performing an additional task, research participants were more likely to refuse to help the supervisor.

The second example pertains to research on conflict resolution through negotiation by Harinck and Ellemers (in press). This research shows that—due to differential interpretations of identical messages—behavioral sequences tend to develop differently among two parties who share the same social identity than they do between members of different groups (see also Moore, Kurtzberg, Thompson, & Morris, 1999). Harinck and Ellemers (in press, study 1) demonstrated that—in anticipation of actual negotiation—an ingroup negotiation partner is generally expected to be more trustworthy and cooperative than an outgroup negotiation partner (see also Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Kramer, Pommerenke, & Newton, 1993; Kramer, Shah, & Woerner, 1995). However, a second study by Harinck and Ellemers (in press), in which negotiation was actually followed through, showed that the provision of identical information affected the interaction differently depending on the group membership of the person who communicated it. Specifically, an ingroup partner who volunteered information about his/her personal interest in the negotiation elicited a *cooperative* exchange with mutual concern for both parties' interests (i.e., personal disclosure enhanced trust), but when an outgroup negotiation partner revealed his/her personal interest, this led to reduced concern for the other and resulted in more *competitive* negotiation behavior (i.e., personal disclosure *reduced* trust).

To conclude this section, in summary we have shown that, in line with social identity principles, circumstances which induce a sense of common identity among those who work together tend to promote collaborative effort and to improve group performance. This runs counter to traditional approaches to the problem of social loafing (which advocate individuation as a means of avoiding motivational loss) but it also opens up the prospect of achieving motivational gains through collaborative work, and helps create collaborative contexts in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Our examination of the way that social identity affects communication in work contexts has also shown that whether or not people identify with their co-workers generates identity-based expectations about those others that shape patterns of communication and in turn affects displays of motivated behavior. In this way, social identities shape the way in which people both send and receive information in organizational contexts and this has important ongoing consequences for the development of interactions and the impact that these have in turn on motivation and performance.

Social Identity as a Determinant of Normative Behavior and Organizational Influence

We noted above that self-categorization theory provides an analysis not simply of the way in which individuals' perceptions and judgements are shaped by social identity concerns, but also of the way in which social identity provides a basis for mutual social influence (Turner, 1987, 1991). Specifically, the theory asserts that an important consequence of people perceiving themselves in terms of social identity is that they agree, and expect to agree, with others who they categorize as similar to themselves in any given context. In this way, social identity has an ongoing *regulatory* function as a basis for normative information that gives potentially idiosyncratic observations social and organizational currency. Moreover, it is argued that abstractly determined *information quality* is not the sole (or even the major) determinant of influence in the manner suggested by classical social psychological theory (cf. Festinger, 1953). Rather, the capacity of any information source to exert influence is conditioned by that person's social categorical relationship to the recipient.

Support for these ideas is provided by a large body of social psychological research (reviewed in Haslam, 2001; Postmes, 2003), which has also fleshed out a number of corollaries. Specifically, along the lines of the discussion in the previous section, evidence broadly relevant to the analysis of social and organizational communication suggests that (a) it is only possible to exert positive influence over other people to the extent that we and they are acting in terms of shared social identity (McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson, & Turner, 1994; Mackie, Worth, & Asuncion, 1990; Wilder, 1977); (b) only those with whom we share social identity are seen as qualified to inform us about relevant aspects of social reality and, hence, to reduce our subjective uncertainty about the social world (McGarty, Turner, Oakes, & Haslam, 1993); (c) the impact of feedback from another person on our perceptions and behavior depends on their ingroup–outgroup status (Brewer & Kramer, 1985; David & Turner, 1996, 1999); (d) expectations of people's ability to coordinate behavior, and the motivation to do so, are contingent upon perceptions of shared social identity (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty et al., 1998); and (e) desire for affiliation and positive construal of interaction also depend on a sense of common identity (Hogg & Turner, 1987).

Recent work by Haslam and colleagues (Haslam, Jetten, O'Brien, & Jacobs, 2003; Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2004; Haslam, Waghorn, O'Sullivan, Jetten, & O'Brien, 2004) has also demonstrated how these ideas can be applied to the analysis of communications surrounding organizational stress, and specifically to issues of *stress appraisal* (after Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Transactional theories of appraisal have argued that whether or not a particular stressor is interpreted as stressful depends, among other things, on the stress-related information that people are exposed

to (e.g., in the form of informational support). When people are uncertain about a potentially stressful situation, the information supplied by others—regardless of who those others are—is thought to enable them to clarify their understanding of the situation and guide their emotional reaction (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997). However, self-categorization theory predicts that stress reactions will not be determined by information alone, but will also depend on the ingroup–outgroup status of the information source. Consistent with this argument, Haslam, O'Brien et al. (2004) found that information from an ingroup source did affect appraisal in the manner predicted by transactional theorists (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), but that information from an outgroup source had no such effect. Students were less distressed by mathematical tasks if fellow students said they were challenging rather than distressing. However, the same information from a non-student had no such impact.

Studies in the field of leadership have fleshed these points out further. We noted above (p. 72) that the research of Platow et al. (1997, 1998) has shown that followers' endorsement of a leader varies as a function of the degree to which that leader embodies (is prototypical of) an ingroup category that is salient for followers. This line of research has also shown that the leader's capacity to *influence* followers is contingent on the same factors. Platow et al. (1998) have demonstrated that the extent to which followers are influenced by a (male) CEO's injunction to use internal memoranda varies as a function of the degree to which that leader's behavior (his treatment of ingroup and outgroup members) communicates his ingroup membership and serves to advance ingroup goals. Haslam and Platow (2001a) obtained similar findings in a study where a (male) student leader had developed a policy of erecting billboard sites on a university campus. Here participants only supported this policy and, critically, were only willing to do work that would help turn it into practice (by generating useful suggestions for implementation) to the extent that the leader's behavior indicated that he was 'one of us' rather than 'one of them' (see also Duck & Fielding, 1999; Jetten, O'Brien et al., 2002).

However, because the definition of social identity is context-dependent (see pp. 51–53, 68–72 above), it is also the case that the capacity for any individual to influence other group members will also depend on features of normative and comparative context. Support for this idea comes from Platow et al.'s (1998) work showing that the same leader, whose memorandum policy was influential when he adopted a strategy of even-handedness in treatment of ingroup members, was far less influential when even-handedness was extended to the treatment of ingroup *and* outgroup members. In the latter case, the leader proved to be less influential than one who adopted a strategy of ingroup favoritism.

But, as well as accounting for variation in the impact of one person on others, self-categorization theory also predicts that social context should have

an impact on the degree to which all members of a group are motivated to work together to develop *consensus* in relation to a particular organizational activity or norm. In line with the arguments outlined above, the theory suggests that pressures for consensus should flow from social identity salience and that they should increase to the extent that (a) features of context (i.e., contextual fit in interaction with cognitive accessibility) make social identity *salient* and (b) those people whose social identity is salient engage in *social interaction* (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty et al., 1998).

Support for these ideas is provided by experimental studies which examine variation in stereotype consensus as a function of comparative context. These show that groups are more likely to develop consensual stereotypes under conditions where their members interact in contexts where social identity has been made salient by manipulations of fit (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty et al., 1998) or accessibility (e.g., Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999). Work by Sani and Thompson (2001) also extends these ideas to the analysis of norms surrounding organizational dress—showing that these norms are more consensual to the extent that those who express them interact in contexts where social identity is salient (e.g., in intergroup rather than intragroup settings). Such research supports the argument that social identity processes play a key role in the development of a consensual organizational culture that provides people with a common framework for making sense of, and behaving in, their work environment (Bourassa & Ashforth, 1998; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997).

One further domain to which such analysis has recently been applied is group decision-making—and, more specifically, the analysis of *groupthink* (after Janis, 1971). Research in this area has shown that social identity processes play a core role in the development of the core symptoms of groupthink: (a) overestimations of the power and morality of an ingroup, (b) closed-mindedness, and (c) pressures toward uniformity (Turner & Pratkanis, 1994, 1998; Turner, Pratkanis, & Samuels, 2003; see also Kramer, 1998). For example, recent research by Haslam, Ryan, Postmes, Spears, Jetten, and Webley (2005) has shown that factors which render a shared social identity more salient increase the likelihood that group members will maintain commitment to an organizational project that is central to their identity when that project runs into difficulty. Likewise, a field study of bank employees showed that work group members who deviated from workplace norms were derogated, while similar behavior was rated less negatively when performed by someone who didn't belong to the same work group (Bown & Abrams, 2003). However, in contrast to the view that these processes are inherently pathological (in the manner suggested by Janis, 1971), this analysis suggests that they are quite rational—serving group maintenance functions and allowing groups to engage in *collective action* by which means they can 'follow through' on projects (whether 'good' or 'bad') that they might otherwise abandon.

This last point is an important one, as it is common in the social and organizational literature for researchers to malign processes associated with depersonalized, de-individuated group activity at the same time that they champion those associated with personalized, individuated behavior. This means that, even if the productive potential of teams is recognized, practitioners generally remain wary of groups and their psychology—believing that this entails a loss of accuracy, rationality, and selfhood (for a discussion, see Postmes & Spears, 1998; Reicher, 1996; Turner & Oakes, 1997).

In contrast to this view, the social identity approach suggests that the psychological processes implicated in all the phenomena we have discussed above—from leadership and motivation to stereotyping and groupthink—are fundamentally rational and adaptive at the group level. More than this, though, it can be seen that social identity and self-categorization processes are *essential* in the sense that they make these various higher order organizational phenomena possible. In the boldest terms, we would assert that without social identity, and the forms of social perception and social interaction that it specifies, there could be neither organization nor organizations (see Haslam, Postmes et al., 2003).

Social Identity as an Organizational and Political Project

The research reviewed in the above sections focuses on the nature and consequences of social identity, but it says little about the ways in which social identity can be used and managed in organizations. For organizational psychologists in particular this has been a significant issue and one that has underscored debate surrounding issues of negotiation, diversity, and change (for reviews see Jackson, 1992; Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2003; van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003). In all of these areas, core questions center on the way that (perceptions of) intergroup and intragroup differences might be managed in order to promote harmonious group relations and to obtain positive organizational outcomes (e.g., employee satisfaction, enhanced productivity).

In looking at this issue, the main strategies that researchers have focused on differ in the degree to which they place emphasis on the value of identities defined at different levels of abstraction (personal, subgroup social, and superordinate social). The main alternatives that have been considered are represented schematically in Figure 2.5.

Based, among other things, on findings from the minimal group studies, some of the earliest work in this area argued that social identity was itself fundamentally incompatible with positive organizational outcomes. If social identity leads inevitably to homophily and intergroup anatagonism (e.g., as Jost & Elsbach's, 2001 reading suggests) then clearly progressive organizational interventions should work simply to downplay employees' sense of their group memberships—particularly if these are defined oppositionally

	Low	**High**
High	*Assimilation* gives no subgroups voice, but favors high-status groups because they control superordinate identity	*Organic pluralism* gives voice to high and low-status subgroups, and involves both in change processes
Low	*Individuation* gives no subgroups voice, but favors high-status groups because it precludes social change	*Segregation* gives voice to high and low-status subgroups, but does not involve low-status group in change processes

Emphasis on superordinate identity (left axis); Emphasis on subgroup identity (bottom axis)

Figure 2.5   Four approaches to identity development and management.

within the organization. Such prescriptions are not uncommon in the organizational literature (e.g., Daft, 1995) and they can be traced back to the seminal writings of Taylor (1911), who explicitly emphasized 'the importance of individualizing each workman' to optimize work performance (Taylor, 1911, p. 73). However, evidence suggests that *individuation* strategies of this form are not particularly successful (e.g., see Hewstone & Brown, 1986). In part, this is because social identities are often a central component of employees' self-definition and behavior and, hence, they prove resistant to this form of restructuring (Jetten, O'Brien et al., 2002). Even where social identification can be watered down, though, this is often undesirable, since, as noted above, social identity is a core motivator of a range of positive organizational behaviors (e.g., organizational citizenship).

In the light of the problems with individuation approaches, two other strategies whose merits have been assessed in the literature are (a) *separatism* (also known as *segregation* or *simple pluralism*), in which groups are encouraged to pursue distinct interests and goals, and (b) *assimilation*, in which groups are encouraged to merge their distinct identities into one common superordinate identity.

On the face of it, one might expect that separatist solutions would be least promising as these might be expected only to promote intergroup division, conflict, and hostility. There is evidence that this can sometimes be the case (e.g., Hewstone & Brown, 1986). However, research also suggests that group members—particularly those in low-status groups (e.g., members of ethnic minorities)—can benefit from the sense of intragroup solidarity and social support that relations of this form promote (Branscombe, Schmitt, &

Harvey, 1999; James, 1997; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002). Moreover, social identity researchers are increasingly questioning the view that group-based conflict *per se* is bad, noting that it is often the only way that low-status groups can have their concerns addressed (Haslam, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). There is also evidence that oppositionally defined conflict is often desirable as a first stage in identity development processes as it ensures that core issues and concerns are fully aired and understood (Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002; Eggins et al., 2003; O'Brien et al., 2004; Stephenson, 1981).

Diametrically opposed to separatism, the strategy of assimilation has long-standing status within organizational psychology (dating back to Mayo, 1949) as a means of promoting industrial harmony. This strategy has been advocated most vigorously by proponents of Gaertner et al.'s *common ingroup identity model* (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; see also Anastasio, Bachman, Gaertner, & Dovidio, 1997). These authors' experimental work with students and their field research on organizational mergers suggests that strategies which encourage different groups to cast aside their old group memberships and embrace a new superordinate identity—one that is inclusive of members of both the ingroup and the former outgroup—leads to reductions in ingroup bias such that members of the former outgroup come to enjoy levels of favoritism from which only the ingroup had previously benefited.

However, recent work by Van Leeuwen and her colleagues (van Leeuwen & van Knippenberg, 2003; van Leeuwen, van Knippenberg, & Ellemers, 2003) calls these assumptions into question. In particular, experimental and field research suggests that a simple blending of two old identities into a single new one can be problematic because it poses a threat to group distinctiveness (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Breakwell, 1983; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997). Research over the course of a restructure of government organizations by Jetten, O'Brien et al. (2002) makes a similar point, showing that attempts to destroy old departments and meld them into new ones led to particularly poor outcomes (low organizational identification, high resistance to change) for those who identified strongly and uniquely with the pre-restructure unit. Ellemers (2003) reports similar findings in studies of the Dutch National Council for Child Protection and the Hungarian police force.

Furthermore, van Leeuwen et al.'s (2003) research suggests that problems with assimilation are particularly pronounced when there are status differences between groups (as there typically are; see also Terry, 2003). Here, members of low-status groups are likely to feel especially threatened and can react adversely to the fact that the high-status group will typically have greater influence over the definition of the resultant superordinate identity (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Stephenson, 1981). For example, in Terry et al.'s (1996) study of merging hospitals, discussed on p. 62 above, members of

the low-status group acknowledged the inferiority of the ingroup on status-relevant dimensions, but *accentuated* their superiority on the status-irrelevant ones.

Faced with evidence of this form, there is now a reasonable consensus in the literature that, in multiple group settings, the optimal identity structure is neither separatist nor assimilationist. On the contrary, it is *organically pluralistic*, such that members of the different groups come to act in terms of a superordinate identity that does not gloss over group difference, but rather *incorporates group difference as an identity-defining feature* (González & Brown, 2003; Haslam, 2001; Haslam, Jetten et al., 2003; Hornsey & Hogg, 1999, 2000b; Jetten, Duck et al., 2002; van Leeuwen & van Knippenberg, 2003). Identity structures of this form are variously referred to as *multicultural*, *bicultural* (Berry, 1984) or *dual identities* (Gaertner, Bachman, Dovidio, & Banker, 2001; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b) and evidence from a range of studies suggests that such structures are associated with superior outcomes to those associated with each of the other structures considered above. For example, the work of Eggins et al. (2002) has found that negotiators who are encouraged to have high subgroup *and* high superordinate identification have greater commitment to negotiated settlements and perceive them to be fairer than negotiators whose subgroup identities are downplayed or ignored. Jetten, O'Brien et al.'s (2002) research also found that positive reactions to change and commitment to a restructured organization were highest when employees were able to identify with new work groups at the same time that the new arrangements allowed them to retain identification with valued old groups. Further research by Jetten, Duck et al. (2002) also found that leaders of a merged group were more likely to be supported and approved of when they recognized the distinct contribution of pre-existing subgroups. Along similar lines, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Monden, and de Lima (2002) found that long-term commitment to merged administrative and mail organizations was enhanced to the extent that change did not suppress old identities but allowed for a sense of their continuity (see also Ellemers, 2003).

The research literature thus points to the value of distinct organizational units embracing a shared organically pluralistic identity whereby groups 'agree to differ' (van Leeuwen & van Knippenberg, 2003). However, such a conclusion raises a further important question concerning the *activities* that are required to promote an identity of this form. In particular, a key issue relates to the appropriate *temporal sequencing* of programs and interventions designed to increase the salience of identities defined at different levels of abstraction.

Research that has looked at this issue supports the view that, rather than attempt to develop a superordinate identity and then 'break it down' into subgroup identities, it is better to start by allowing subgroup members to engage in activities that promote that identity and then bring different groups

together with a view to building a superordinate understanding. Such research is only in its infancy, but Eggins et al.'s (2002, 2003) work indicates that negotiation is improved if a phase of 'subgroup caucusing' precedes a phase of 'superordinate consensualization', and this finding accords with evidence from the negotiation and conflict literatures. Haslam, Eggins, and Reynolds (2003) have synthesized these ideas in the form of an integrated model of organizational development—the ASPIRe model (acronym for Actualizing Social and Personal Identity Resources; see also Eggins et al., 2003; O'Brien et al., 2004)—which draws upon the broad corpus of organizational work in the social identity tradition. This model specifies a four-phase process which starts by ascertaining the subgroup social identities that employees use to define themselves in the context of organizational life as a whole (rather than imposing those identities on them or assuming which ones are important; e.g., on the basis of demography). In the next two stages these subgroups meet, first separately, and then together in order to identify issues and establish goals that are relevant to those identities. In the final phase, organizational planning and goal-setting are informed by the outcomes of the previous two phases.

Full tests of this model are underway (see O'Brien et al., 2004) but preliminary evidence suggests that ASPIRe provides a useful framework for managing both diversity and stress, especially for members of devalued or low-status groups (O'Brien & Haslam, 2003). In large part, this is because it allows groups to develop and express social identities that are important to them in a supportive and non-threatening context, and empowers them to take important issues forward and reconcile them with the identities of other groups and the goals of the organization as a whole.

Clearly, these issues of identity management are complex, and they bring into play a range of political concerns that are customarily excised from organizational treatments of topics such as conflict, diversity, and stress (see Ellemers, Haslam, Platow, & van Knippenberg, 2003; Haslam, 2004 for reviews). Nevertheless, if the practical potential of the social identity approach is to be realized, this is a nettle that needs to be firmly grasped. Moreover, by attempting to come to terms with the political as well as the psychological dimensions of identity, this should allow for a more fruitful dialogue between researchers in the range of disciplines (e.g., sociology, history, politics, management, economics) whose interests converge around this fundamental topic.

CONCLUSION: WHAT THE SOCIAL IDENTITY APPROACH OFFERS AND WHAT IT DOES NOT

Our review of research that applies ideas from the social identity perspective to issues in I/O psychology, on the one hand attests to the immense appeal

and popularity of the approach, but on the other uncovers some important controversies in the literature. Thus, we want to conclude, *first*, by considering the added value of a social identity approach to the understanding of organizational problems, *second*, by examining the reasons for its appeal, *third*, summarizing the problems that have arisen in the past, and, *finally*, by exploring the ways in which these problems may be avoided in the future.

What does it add?

After summarizing the central ideas and defining the concepts that characterize social identity theory and self-categorization theory, in this chapter we have reviewed research showing how the application of this body of work contributes to the understanding of the cognitive and motivational dynamics of identity in organizations, as well as the interplay between multiple possible identities. That is, we have specified the circumstances that enhance the cognitive *salience* of particular identities rather than others, and have demonstrated the implications of this for the relevant *content* of people's identities. Furthermore, on a more motivational note, we have examined how people actively *negotiate* their work-related identities. We have reviewed research illustrating the use of different identity management strategies in work situations, within the constraints set by, on the one hand, the objective characteristics of the situation at hand and, on the other, people's subjective beliefs about the opportunities and obstacles they face.

Subsequently, we have used a social identity analysis to understand how common goals or values can be adopted by individual workers, so that they become internalized as intrinsically motivating. We have shown how these insights help create the circumstances that optimize group performance, and we have considered how transformation of the self from an individual to a group level impacts upon work-related communication. Then, we have moved on to explain how a social identity approach can help us understand and predict the ways that people cope with uncertainties and stress, and how the process of social identification is essential to coordination in groups as well as to successful leadership. Finally, we have addressed the political dimension of this knowledge which emerges when it is applied with the aim of resolving practical organizational problems. As we have seen, some consequences of social identity processes may appear incompatible with higher level organizational goals, and awareness of how this works may be used by managers who want to encourage the organization and its members to develop in certain directions rather than others.

Why does it appeal?

As is evident from its immense and growing popularity among those who aim to understand the psychological dynamics of organizational life, the social

identity perspective holds out a number of attractions for researchers and practitioners. It provides a rich theoretical framework that provides a unified perspective from which to understand and address a plethora of issues that are relevant in the contemporary workplace. It also offers a range of tried-and-tested methodological and empirical tools to assist researchers with the practicalities of this enterprise.

However, in addition to these 'good' reasons, the social identity approach has also been embraced for 'bad' reasons. Importantly, it uses concepts that appear to converge with familiar terminology and work-related metaphors and that are amenable to relatively straightforward empirical examination. As a result, on occasion, the rich store of predictions that the social identity framework offers has been used merely to harvest single hypotheses. As we have noted, this has contributed to inaccurate representations and misconceptions of the theory. Specifically, some researchers have used social identity theory: (a) to promote social and organizational identification as an individual difference variable, (b) to predict the universal occurrence of ingroup bias, and (c) to characterize group behavior as merely another arena in which considerations of personal self-interest and instrumental exchange operate. In each of these cases, we have explained why and how they involve a misconstrual of fundamental premises of theory.

In sum, the attention that organizational researchers have paid to the social identity perspective is to be welcomed, but we also feel that its theoretical resources have been underused in some respects and overused in others. Specific predictions have been overused to the extent that they are reified as universal mechanisms and come to be seen as the psychologized essence of theory. At the same time, other aspects of the theory—for example, the operation of different identity management strategies under different circumstances—have been underused, and are often overlooked. This has resulted in the paradoxical situation that social identity and self-categorization theories are sometimes criticized for not incorporating concerns which in fact are a key component of their original formulation.

What are the problems?

Thus, despite its widespread appeal, attempts to use the social identity approach to address and resolve organizational problems have at times proved frustrating. Researchers have found it hard to provide a simple answer to their practical questions and, hence, have started to question the value of this theoretical framework. This complexity of the theory and the need to incorporate moderated relations (instead of merely predicting main effects), have led some to conclude that the theory is unparsimonious and irrefutable, as the same basic idea can be used to explain and predict effects as well as counter-effects (for more elaborate discussions of this issue see Ellemers et al., 2003a, b; Turner, 1999). However, as we have tried to

show, empirical practices founded on flawed understanding (e.g., using identification as an individual difference variable or conceptualizing predicted effects in terms of interdependence and self-interest) simply do not do justice to the theory and, hence, the limited contribution of research that has employed these practices speaks to the flawed application of sound ideas, and not necessarily to shortcomings of the theoretical perspective.

These very developments have elicited objections from those who contributed to original formulations and further developments of social identity theory, as they argue that social and organizational researchers present the theory as a straw man and criticize it for the wrong reasons (Ellemers et al., 2003a, b; Turner, 1999; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). As we saw above, defenders of the social identity perspective have in turn been critical of researchers who press social identity principles into service in the interests of piecemeal empiricism, in order to psychologize ingroup bias, or to promote identity as an apsychological metaphor. In certain ways it can be seen that neither of these stances is very productive. For when scientific debate and empirical research are focused only on these disputes, other more promising opportunities for theoretical advancement and practical understanding are lost. It is in this spirit that we presented our overview of relevant controversies above, as we think that these need to be dealt with and left behind before we can appreciate and benefit from the important contributions that social identity work is in a position to make.

How should we proceed?

In their seminal article, Ashforth and Mael (1989) concluded that the application of social identity theory to organizational problems can help understand issues of organizational *socialization* (the development of commitment and the internalization of organizational values and beliefs), the resolution of *multiple role* demands (the ordering or separation of multiple identities), and the emergence of *conflict* in the absence of objective causes (i.e., between subunits within the same organization). Thus, the research agenda they outlined focused on three main issues, namely:

1. The development of a measure of organizational identification that could not only be distinguished from other related constructs, but could be defined in relation to different subgroups in the organization in order to establish multiple commitments.
2. The examination of dynamic changes in organizational identity (e.g., as a result of newly created organizations, or as a result of new appointments) and the internalization of organizational values.
3. The interplay between identification, comparison, and conflict, incorporating the effects of different dimensions of intergroup comparison, and the perceived legitimacy of the status quo.

Table 2.2 Topics addressed in articles on 'social identity' and 'organizations' (1990–2004).

Theme	Topic	Frequency	%
Conceptualization	Conceptualization and measurement	24	14
	Multiple identities	22	13
Dynamic changes	Mergers and acquisitions	10	6
	Distinctiveness and salience	5	3
	Development and newcomer socialization	4	2
Comparison and conflict	Organizational attractiveness	21	13
	Diversity and conflict	36	21
	Responses to threat	6	4
Other	Communication	8	5
	Leadership	15	9
	Motivation	6	4
	Other (ethics, norms, symbols)	10	6
	Total	*167*	*100*

Yet, reflecting retrospectively on the way that social identity research in this area has actually developed, it is clear that it did not stick to this agenda. Looking at Table 2.2, in which published organizational articles that deal with social identity issues are catalogued in terms of the main topic they address, it might superficially appear that the themes that have emerged in the literature relate broadly to the paths identified by Ashforth and Mael (1989), as issues of conceptualization and multiple identities are indeed among the most studied. However, closer inspection of these published papers suggests that most of this work has failed to address these topics in such a way as to provide answers to the key questions posed by Ashforth and Mael.

First, there has been some discussion about the conceptualization and measurement of identity in organizations (e.g., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Hamid, 1996; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), and it has been acknowledged that people can identify with different organizational constituencies (e.g., Mael & Ashforth, 2001; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). However, research driven by the idea that workers can have multiple identities has mainly been used to explain the fact that identification with the organization tends to be lower when people prefer to define themselves in terms of an alternative or competing identity—for instance, in terms of their family role (Lobel & StClair, 1992), or in terms of their national identity in a multi-national organization (Salk & Shenkar, 2001). As a result, to date only a small set of studies have explicitly focused on the way different multiple identities are *interrelated*, or how they can be managed (e.g., Jetten, O'Brien et al., 2002; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). A promising direction for future research in this area can be found in the development of ideas (a) about organizational

'faultlines' that tend to emerge when multiple categorizations reinforce each other to define specific subgroups of workers in the organization (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Thatcher, Jehn, & Zanutto, 2003), and (b) about cross-cutting categorizations that may help reduce perceived differences and re-solve intergroup conflict (Crisp, Hewstone, & Rubin, 2001; see Cartwright, 2005).

Second, although there is a small body of research that approaches the effects of organizational mergers, acquisitions, and restructuring from a social identity perspective (e.g., Jetten, O'Brien et al, 2002; Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001; van Knippenberg et al., 2002), some studies in this area have merely examined how initial identifications may facilitate or hinder the success of such changes—treating identification as an individual difference variable (e.g., Haunschild, Moreland, & Murrell, 1994). In a similar vein, organizational research on distinctiveness and identity salience has merely established that people are more likely to be aware of a particular identity when this represents a minority rather than a majority in the organization (Ely, 1994; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998). However, so far no attempts have been made to trace how these identifications (and their behavioral conse-quences) are *adapted* when the relative distinctiveness of different groups in the organization *changes* over time. This is a highly relevant issue, as demographic developments, globalization, and migration all imply that organizations will continue to be confronted with changes in the composition of their personnel, in terms of gender, age, and ethnic or cultural back-ground. Another striking omission in research to date is that only a handful of studies have focused on other forms of change in organizations; for example, those that involve newcomer socialization, increasingly flexible employment practices (Veenstra et al., 2004), and organizational schism (Sani & Reicher, 2000; Sani & Todman, 2002). Thus, despite Ashforth and Mael's admonitions (1989), it would seem that, to date, research on social identity in organizations has failed to provide an extensive analysis of the ways in which organizational change (at both global and local levels) affects people's identities (for a notable exception, see Herriot & Scott-Jackson, 2002).

Third, studies on comparison and conflict so far have mainly focused on establishing that people are more likely to identify with organizations that have a positive image (e.g., Dukerich et al., 2002; Dutton et al., 1994; Turban & Greening, 1997), whereas increased turnover is observed in less attractive organizations (Alvesson, 2000). It is striking to see that the most heavily researched topic is that of diversity and conflict in organizations. Neverthe-less, we feel the majority of work in this area does not do justice to the social identity approach as it typically makes reference to social identity theory only in order—incorrectly—to provide a source for the prediction that demo-graphic differences between members of the organization should hinder organizational identification, enhance conflict, and decrease performance

(e.g., Polzer et al., 2002; Zatzick, Elvira, & Cohen, 2003). In contrast to this interpretation, as noted previously, we maintain that application of social identity reasoning leads to the prediction that diversity can have *positive as well as negative* effects on identification and performance, depending on the extent to which diversity represents organizational goals and values (Reynolds et al., 2003; Rink & Ellemers, 2003; Van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003). The observation that ethnic diversity among employees is associated with increased performance in innovation-focused organizations, whereas diversity diminishes performance in low-innovation organizations (Richard, McMillan, & Chadwick, 2003), is consistent with this reasoning, and in our view supports—rather than challenges—an analysis in social identity terms. Turning to the other topics that have been investigated in the broad area of comparison and conflict, again only a few studies have addressed more complex issues, such as strategic responses to social identity threat and the way in which these are influenced by the presence of multiple comparative dimensions, or the perceived security of existing intergroup relations (e.g., Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

In sum, we would conclude that—rather than having to develop novel or additional ideas about the possible contributions of social identity (and self-categorization) principles to organizational psychology, or specifying the added value of a social identity approach—progress could in fact be made simply by attending faithfully to the research agenda originally laid out by Ashforth and Mael (1989). In practical as well as theoretical terms, there is thus considerable scope for discovering more in the future by rediscovering more from the past.

Yet, in addition to the topics that Ashforth and Mael (1989) identified, some traditional areas of research in organizational psychology (such as motivation, leadership, power, and communication) have only just begun to be explored from a social identity perspective. The initial results of these efforts hold out great promise for the development of a broader and deeper understanding of these organizational phenomena. This strategy has already yielded an abundance of innovative ideas that have significant theoretical implications and relevant practical consequences (see Ellemers et al., 2004; Haslam, 2001, 2004; Haslam, Postmes et al., 2003; Hogg & Terry, 2001; Turner & Haslam, 2001). We would argue, though, that in order for the exploration of these and other topics to be maximally beneficial, enthusiasm for new challenges still needs to be tempered by respect for the pioneering contributions of the original theory and metatheory. This is not because there is nothing new under the sun, but because more will be found if unhelpful barriers to illumination are removed.

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