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The Collective Self[a]

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In the hands of sociologists and increasingly of social psychologists as well, the analysis of self reveals a paradox. At its very essence, the construct of self is meant to capture the most unique and individualized aspect of personality. Even so, the thrust of many arguments has repeatedly been that this unique and individual core of personality may be fundamentally determined by shared membership in larger collectives. The notion that the individual self (James' empirical self or "me") is born of the collective, that social forces of culture and society as well as social microenvironments shape it in indelible ways is, in one sense, quite radical. Yet, at least to those who are broadly educated regarding the last several decades of thinking about self, the notion that a sense of self is socially determined seems quite acceptable. The ease with which the link between self and larger social units has come to be assumed is the result of a longstanding and recurrent theme in social science emphasizing the social construction of identity. Whether it be in classic books such as *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934), in constructs such as the "looking-glass self" (Cooley, 1922), in notions of self as managed in presentation to others (Goffman, 1956), in collections of ideas in volumes such as *Self in Social Interaction* (Gordon & Gergen, 1968), or more recent psychological treatments of self (see Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Deaux & Major, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) the idea is forcefully driven home that a sense of self exists and even comes to be because of and in response to a social world of many others.

Although recent social constructionist critiques, allied with postmodernist and deconstructionist views of the individual self (Gergen, 1987; see Kitzinger, 1992), have offered new opinions about the social construction of self and identity, we find our kindred spirits in the classical writings of Mead, Cooley, Goffman, Parsons, Freud, and Turner among others, and in contemporary empirical research that examines the extent to which self and identity are socially determined. Of the many facets of social influences on self, we attend to those that show, as directly as possible, the influence of so-

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cial groups on individual constructions of self. Perhaps most closely to our own thinking, George Herbert Mead (1934) pointed out the relation between the individual and the collective: "So the self reaches its full development by organizing these individual attitudes of others into the organized social or group attitudes, and by thus becoming an individual reflection of the general systematic pattern of social or group behavior in which it and the others are all involved—a pattern which enters as a whole into the individual's experience in terms of these organized group attitudes which, through the mechanism of his central nervous system, he takes toward himself, just as he takes the individual attitudes of others" (p. 156–158). Mead's point is a most general one, of how social groups influence attitudes and beliefs about the world at large. Our focus will be to examine the empirical literature regarding how social groups come to influence a subset of such views, e.g., attitudes and beliefs about oneself. The line between what constitutes self and non-self beliefs and attitudes can become quite blurry, and our demarcation will be largely pragmatic.

The question we seek to address here concerns a specific thread of the general assumption regarding the social nature of the self. In particular, our concern lies with the question of how we come to be who we are because of the social groups of which we are members. In other words, how and to what extent are the most unique aspects of personality, our descriptive and evaluative views of our self, shaped by the collectives to which we belong. Our focus will be rather narrowly circumscribed. We attend specifically to the extent to which an individual self emerges as a function of one's social identity, that is, through one's belonging in social groups. Such groups may be ones into which one is born (e.g., gender, race, religion, nationality) or groups into which one is elected (Republican, NYAS). The latter condition muddies the research question of how social groups shape an individual self by creating the problem of self-selection, but it nevertheless represents an important type of group membership to which attention must be paid.

Although early views regarding self such as Mead's are emphatic about the fundamental nature of the link between self and collective, it is only recently that empirically testable social psychological theories and evidence have come to be available, at least on this side of the Atlantic. For this reason, the literature is not vast, and it only scratches the surface of the multiplicity of issues regarding the self and the collective. In the main portion of the chapter, we focus on only two aspects of this relationship. First, what is the nature of the influence of collectives on self-enhancement? How and to what extent do the groups of which we are members create and enhance our feelings of self-worth and esteem? Second, what is the nature of the influence of collectives on self-knowledge? How and to what extent do the groups of which we are members define the contents of our self definitions and self images? Obviously the two questions are related, that is, self-knowledge can be positive or negative and therefore with clear consequences for

self-enhancement, but we discuss them separately to maintain the traditionally separate theoretical and methodological focus on self-enhancement and self-knowledge.

An interesting aspect of the individual/collective self is the apparent inconsistency that exists between perceptions of self-uniqueness and actual self-sharedness with members of one's social groups. Individuals, especially those raised in cultures that emphasize individualism, express a strong sense of their uniqueness and the belief that their individuality is a function of personal choices they freely make. One might easily examine this in statements such as "I am a talented basketball player" or "I am choosing motherhood over a career" or "I don't like math" or "I like spicy food." Among the goals of the review is to assess the extent to which individuals' belief in self-autonomy, uniqueness of preferences, and control over life choices may be illusory. Insofar as prominent components of one's self-concept show the influence of collectives (even when one may be unaware of such influences or even actively rejects them), we may be able to speculate about the unconscious influence of social group membership on self. To this end, we present data that indicate the extent to which self-esteem and self-knowledge are shaped by the collectives to which we belong.

SELF-ENHANCEMENT

The desire for self-enhancement, or a positive view of oneself, has traditionally been considered a fundamental motive of the self (e.g., Allport, 1937; James, 1890; Greenwald, 1980; Steele, 1988; Swann, 1990; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Tesser, 1988; Wylie, 1979). More than a century ago, James (1890), who described a multiply-defined self consisting of spiritual, material, and social components, asserted that individuals actively choose those aspects of self "on which to stake one's salvation" (p. 310), in order to maximize positive self-evaluation. Search for the roots of self-enhancement continues in contemporary empirical research as well, such as Steele's self-affirmation theory (1988) and Tesser's self-esteem maintenance theory (1988). Whatever the particular form of self-enhancement, individuals are expected to strive to maximize psychological well-being by seeking out and attending to experiences that reflect positively on the self, while avoiding those that reflect poorly on the self. It appears that such a strategy is not without its rewards. In the past decade, a growing consensus has emerged that maintaining a positive view of self has many benefits. For example, individuals with relatively positive self-views tend to be at lower risk for depression (Crandall, 1973; Wylie, 1979) and hopelessness (Abramsom, Metalsky & Alloy, 1989), to experience more positive affect (Pelham & Swann, 1989) and greater life satisfaction (Diener, 1984), and to be at lower risk for negative health outcomes (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Thus, a positive self-

view appears to play an important role in individuals' psychological and physical well-being.

A robust body of research now exists documenting the strategies individuals employ to achieve and maintain a positive self-view (see Banaji & Prentice, 1994 for a review). For example, individuals routinely engage in a variety of social-reasoning strategies including biased memory retrieval (Kunda & Sanitioso, 1989), self-serving attributional processes (Tennen & Herzberger, 1987), and the use of self-serving definitions of success and goodness (e.g., Dunning & Cohen, 1992; Dunning, Perie & Story, 1991). However, most of this research has focused exclusively on the ways that self-enhancement is derived from individualistic aspects of the self such as one's competencies, attractiveness, or personal accomplishments. For our purposes, a less traditional literature bearing on the issue of self-enhancement must be considered. This literature needs to inform us about the ways, if any, that self-enhancement can be achieved through identification with collectives.

Much research on the collective aspects of self has been guided by *social identity theory* and its later incarnation, *self-categorization theory*. The advantage of the presence of a single major theoretical account is that it has provided research focused on a prescribed set of hypotheses that are central to the theory. The two theories are embedded in what Abrams and Hogg (1988) labeled "the self-esteem hypothesis," that individuals are motivated by a desire for a positive self-view. The theories' most relevant contribution from our perspective is that one's views of self can be derived not only from individual aspirations and accomplishments but also from membership in and identification with social groups. Specifically, social identity theory asserts that through processes of categorization of the self as a group member and subsequent depersonalization, one maintains or enhances self-esteem through intergroup social comparisons (for reviews, see Tajfel, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1984; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner & Giles, 1981). That is, an individual's motivation for a positive self-view provides a basis for viewing ingroups, and thus the self, in a positive light relative to outgroups and their members. In order to achieve these goals, individuals may employ a number of biased reasoning strategies including intergroup differentiation and discrimination, and ingroup favoritism. Thus, these theories provide an explanation not only for how self-concepts are shaped by social groups, but also for how individuals achieve positive views of the self through intergroup processes.

A favorite among social psychologists, the classic study by Hastorf and Cantril (1954), demonstrated how group members will employ biased reasoning strategies that result in favorable perceptions of one's ingroup. Following a Princeton-Dartmouth football game, Hastorf and Cantril had students from both schools view a film of the game, and asked them to make note of all the illegal plays. Even after being explicitly instructed to put aside school loyalties when making their judgments, students from both schools

perceived their team as less infractious than reflected by the officials' assessments. Regardless of the fact that most of the students in the study were unlikely to personally know any of the football players, they appear to have demonstrated an ingroup bias which quite possibly may have resulted from a desire to derive positive feelings from sharing social category membership with the football team from one's own school. While this study shows that group membership did influence judgments of one's group (a group-enhancement effect), and other research shows that individuals do indeed bask in the reflected glory of group achievement (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman & Sloan, 1976), these studies do not directly demonstrate whether one's own self-image is enhanced by membership in a group. However, it is possible that by viewing one's team in a positive light, one could simultaneously enhance or at least maintain a positive self-view as well.

A recent collection of studies has explored the direct effects of ingroup bias on individual self-esteem (see Abrams, 1992 for a review). For example, Oakes and Turner (1980) employed the minimal group paradigm in which subjects were randomly assigned to one of two groups, ostensibly on the basis of preference for a painting. Despite the minimal basis for group membership (group members had no contact and did not know one another), when given the opportunity to allocate resources, experimental subjects showed an ingroup bias. That is, they assigned greater resources to members of their ingroup than to members of the outgroup. Social identity theory asserts that such ingroup biases derive from individuals' desire for a positive self-view, which is largely based on favorable evaluations of one's ingroup relative to outgroups. In other words, because individuals derive meaningful information about the self from the groups to which they belong, it is desirable to achieve favorable intergroup comparisons, thereby achieving a positive view of the self. Oakes and Turner (1980) indeed found that experimental subjects who had just demonstrated the ingroup bias reported higher self-esteem than subjects who did not engage in the allocation task and thus had not discriminated against the outgroup. Consistent with this finding, Lemyre and Smith (1985) later demonstrated that group membership alone did not provide a basis for enhanced self-esteem. Instead, only after engaging in intergroup discrimination (and hence, ingroup favoritism) did subjects achieve higher self-esteem. Other studies have also provided direct evidence that ingroup favoritism elevates self-esteem, even when subjects were explicitly instructed to cooperate with outgroup members (Hogg, Turner, Nascimento-Schulz, & Spriggs, 1986). Thus, these studies support social identity theory's assertion that enhancement in self-esteem is accomplished through positive intergroup comparisons.

Although originally formulated to explain intergroup behavior, social identity theory provides a basis for understanding the development of a "collective self." Derived from social identity theory, self-categorization theory asserts that the self is a cognitive structure containing two subsystems:

an individual self ("I") and a social self ("we") (Turner, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reichter & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994), and situations vary in the degree to which they regulate the salience of these different selves. For example, viewing oneself as a "Princeton student" will be much more likely when attending a university football game than when taking a final exam. The intergroup nature of the football game makes salient one's group (or social) identity, while the exam-taking situation is likely to invoke thoughts about one's unique attributes and personal identity such as being a good student. Salience of group membership (or social identity) can be triggered by several factors inherent in either the self, in others, or in the situation (see Deaux & Major, 1987 for a discussion of these factors).

When the social aspects of self become salient, one presumably de-emphasizes unique, idiosyncratic attributes in deference to "perceptions of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category . . ." (Turner *et al.*, 1987, p. 50). Once this shift to a collective identity occurs, self-perceptions are systematically biased to render the self more closely aligned with stereotypic ingroup characteristics. Thus, where group identity is salient, individuals behave and perceive themselves in accord with characteristics of their group. Because self-evaluations will be derived from evaluations of the group when group identity is salient, individuals are motivated to view the group, and consequently the self, as positively distinctive (Oakes & Turner, 1980; Turner, 1981).

Several empirical studies support the assertion that an individual's behavior and self-conceptions are more likely to reflect characteristics of the group when social group membership is salient. For example, Hogg and Turner (1987) demonstrated that when the salience of gender is enhanced, men and women define themselves according to gender by endorsing gender-stereotypic attributes as true of the self, as will be discussed further in the later section on the social bases of self-knowledge. However, an increasing number of studies have begun to demonstrate that collective identification does not always lead to enhanced self-esteem. For example, Hogg and Turner found that collective identification had positive consequences for the self-esteem of men, but had a negative effect on women's self-esteem. Despite the fact that women showed more ethnocentrism (ingroup favoritism) than men, their self-esteem nonetheless suffered when gender was made salient. Hogg and Turner (1987) acknowledged that due to social status differences between groups, identification with a low-status group could sometimes lead to a negative social identity and a negative self-view (see also Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Lorenzi-Cioldi (1991) found similar evidence for the negative effects of self-categorization on members of low-status groups. In this study as well, self-categorization was examined as a function of gender salience, and by the nature of the social intergroup context, women were *a priori* identified to be the low-status group. Results from this study

supported the previous finding by showing that negative attributes were more likely to be endorsed by women when gender was salient, thus providing a more negative self-view.

Consistent with the idea that perception of low status of the ingroup results in negative effects on self-esteem, Frable, Wortman, Joseph, Kirscht and Kessler (1994) found that gay men who perceived their group as stigmatized had lower self-esteem. Several other studies have provided similar evidence for the negative self-evaluative consequences of identifying with a low-status group (e.g., Brewer & Weber, 1994; Simon & Hamilton, 1994; Simon, Pantaleo & Mummendey, 1995). Together, these studies suggest that group membership may actually pose a threat to self-esteem under some conditions, which is problematic for a self-esteem explanation for collective identification (see Abrams, 1992; Abrams & Hogg, 1988). According to social identity and self-categorization theories, because the individual is assumed to be always striving for a positive self-view, members of low-status groups should either attempt to leave or dissociate themselves from such groups or to reconceptualize the ingroup's status in such a way as to achieve a positive ingroup perception. However, observation and research has not supported the idea that members of low-status groups consistently engage in these strategies, nor that these strategies are always successful in enhancing self-esteem. Instead, members of low-status groups appear to sometimes continue to identify with and define themselves in terms of their group membership, despite its negative status. Furthermore, individuals who belong to disadvantaged groups do not appear to suffer from low self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 1989). In a recent review of empirical work on stigma and self-esteem, Crocker and Major (1989) concluded that the empirical evidence does not support the claim that membership in a low-status (or stigmatized) group negatively affects the self-concepts of its members. These authors review twenty years of self-esteem research showing that stigmatized individuals maintain feelings of global self-esteem equal to (and in some cases, higher than) nonstigmatized individuals.

Several explanations have been offered to account for the lack of a consistent correlation between group status and self-esteem. For example, Abrams (1992) suggests that global self-esteem measures may be insensitive to the momentary changes brought about by the situational salience of group membership. Following the advice of Fishbein (1967), Abrams and Hogg (1988) also suggest that self-esteem measures must account for the appropriate level of specificity, which would entail measures of collective rather than personal self-esteem. Only recently has research begun to assess the collective self-esteem of group members, using a measure developed by Crocker and Luhtanen (1990). In a recent study by Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine and Broadnax (1994), white, black and Asian subjects completed Collective Self-Esteem scales specific to their race. The results demonstrate that there is not always a clear and direct relationship between the perceived

status of one's group and collective self-esteem. For example, among black subjects, there was a near-zero correlation between perceptions of how others viewed their group and their own collective self-esteem. Black subjects, at least those who participated in this study, chose to identify strongly with their group and to positively evaluate their group regardless of perceived devaluation from the outgroup. This finding is in stark contrast to the results for white and Asian subjects from the same population, who showed a relatively strong correlation between how they believe others evaluate their group and their own collective self-esteem. Thus, the findings for white and Asian subjects provide support for the symbolic interactionist concept of "reflected appraisals" or the "looking-glass self" (Cooley, 1922), while the findings from black subjects suggest that individuals may develop strategies for dissociating themselves from the negative evaluations of a dominant group.

In fact, Crocker & Major (1989) suggest several ways in which membership in a stigmatized group may actually protect self-esteem (see also Myrdal, 1944; Taylor & Walsh, 1979). They propose three self-protective mechanisms which may be employed by members of low-status groups. Specifically, they propose that low-status individuals protect the self by (*a*) attributing negative feedback to prejudice against one's group, (*b*) selectively comparing outcomes with members of one's own group rather than with nonstigmatized outgroup members, and (*c*) selectively devaluing domains in which one's own group performs poorly or valuing domains in which one's group excels. Recent empirical research supports the viability of each of these strategies.

Several studies have begun to explore the effectiveness of the first strategy, attributing negative feedback to prejudice, for maintaining self-esteem. For example, Jensen, White & Galliher (1982) found that subjects who attributed the negative treatment of others to their race, religion, or nationality maintained self-esteem, while subjects who attributed negative treatment to personal attributes such as appearance or intelligence showed decrements in self-esteem. Recent experimental studies by Crocker, Major and colleagues (Crocker, Cornwell & Major, 1993; Crocker, Voelkl, Testa & Major, 1991; Major & Crocker, 1993) provide further and more direct evidence for the conditions under which individuals are likely to attribute negative feedback to prejudice and its implications for self-esteem. This line of research demonstrates that under conditions of attributional ambiguity, individuals may engage in a self-protective strategy to contend with the self-evaluative implications of having a stigmatized identity. Attributional ambiguity arises when individuals who belong to stigmatized groups experience ambiguity with regard to the causes of the behavior of others toward them. For example, in one set of experiments, overweight subjects who were aware that the experimenter could see them attributed negative feedback to the experimenter's prejudice against overweight people. When subjects were

able to make this external attribution, they maintained high self-esteem despite the negative feedback. However, when they received positive feedback under these circumstances, they also attributed this to experimenter bias and thus, this attribution too had a negative effect on self-esteem (Crocker, Cornwell & Major, 1993). Studies by Dion and his colleagues similarly demonstrate the self-protective effects of attributions of prejudice on self-esteem (Dion & Earn, 1975; Dion, Earn & Yee, 1978). However, both of these lines of research also demonstrated that when subjects were unable to attribute feedback to prejudice, self-esteem suffered at the hand of negative feedback and increased following positive feedback.

The second self-protective strategy suggested by Crocker and Major (1989), the tendency to make intragroup rather than intergroup comparisons, is also empirically supported. Studies of social comparison processes demonstrate that people often choose to compare themselves with similar others (Suls & Wills, 1991), and especially with other ingroup members (e.g., Major & Forcey, 1985). Ingroup comparisons appear not only to be informative, but also to provide opportunities for downward comparison as a self-esteem enhancing strategy (see Wood, 1989). For example, several empirical studies have repeatedly demonstrated that members of stigmatized groups perceive their ingroup as receiving more negative outcomes (e.g., salaries) and treatment (e.g., discrimination) than they receive personally, a phenomenon called the personal/group discrimination discrepancy (for a review, see Taylor, Wright & Porter, 1994). Many explanations have been offered to account for this phenomenon which are beyond the scope of this chapter. For our purpose, these findings provide evidence for the ways that low-status group members may be able to maintain or even enhance self-esteem through within-group comparisons. Unfortunately, little if any of this research has directly explored the effects of ingroup comparisons on self-esteem.

Finally, Crocker & Major (1989) suggest that members of low-status groups may selectively devalue domains in which their group, and by implication the self, compares negatively with outgroups. Selective attention to dimensions on which one excels was first suggested by James (1890) and is illustrated in the following quote: "I, who for the time have staked my all on being a psychologist, am mortified if others know much more psychology than I. But I am contented to wallow in the grossest ignorance of Greek. My deficiencies there give me no sense of personal humiliation at all" (p. 310). A similar perspective has recently been put forth in Steele's self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988). Steele argues that individuals will disidentify with domains in which they experience repeated disappointment. Because members of stigmatized groups experience chronic negative expectations and feedback in specific domains, members of these groups may choose to "disidentify" with these domains. Empirical support for this proposition comes from studies of African-American adolescents' disidentification with

academic achievement (Ogbu, 1986) as well as physically disabled individuals' disidentification with normative definitions of physical attractiveness (Taylor, 1983).

A tacit assumption underlying much of the research reviewed thus far is that individuals are motivated to think and act in ways that are beneficial to their personal interests, or to their personal self-esteem. While there is ample evidence that individuals employ self-protective as well as self-enhancing strategies under many conditions, current theories are less well-equipped to address conditions under which individuals endorse negative attributes of the group as true of the self, yet as we have already discussed, such effects have been frequently documented (e.g., Frable *et al.*, 1994; Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1991; Simon, Glässner-Bayerl & Stratenwerth, 1991). To explain why individuals would endorse negative views of their own groups as well as of themselves, Jost and Banaji (1994) offered the concept of system justification. Jost and Banaji argue that negative images (or stereotypes) of social groups serve ideological functions, that is, they maintain and explain the *status quo*. Because the dominant ideology tends to be endorsed by the dominated, negative stereotypes about disadvantaged social groups may come to be endorsed even by members of the stigmatized group in order to explain or understand the existing social arrangement. Consistent with social identity theory, the system justification approach suggests that negative stereotypes are most likely to be endorsed by the ingroup when the prevailing social order appears legitimate and stable. Further, Jost and Banaji (1994) suggest that ideology often operates outside of conscious awareness, which would further limit the targets' ability to engage in the self-protective strategies outlined earlier. In other words, the dominant group's negative portrayals of low-status groups may have implicit negative effects on their targets.

While research demonstrates that group membership may be one means by which to achieve a positive self-image, the inconsistency in the data of the relationship between identification with social groups and self-esteem brings into question the appropriateness of the nearly exclusive emphasis on self-esteem as the primary motive for collective identification and suggests that there may be reasons to identify with social groups aside from personal enhancement. The system justification approach suggests one such alternative: individuals may be motivated to justify the social system, rather than to enhance the self or social group. Underlying the system-justification perspective is the notion that social groups provide meaningful information about the self and one's place in the larger social structure. In other words, social groups provide self-knowledge. Recent research on the collective self has explored the ways in which individuals derive self-knowledge through group memberships. In other words, research has shifted away from the evaluative question "How good am I?" to the more cognitively based question, "Who am I?". In the following section, we will review research exploring the ways in which self-knowledge, rather than self-esteem, is derived from group membership.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Motivation for self-knowledge refers to the desire to define and comprehend one's attributes, abilities, opinions, and accomplishments as well one's social role and social status. In other words, individuals strive to construct a coherent self-definition among the otherwise "booming, buzzing confusion." Several related motives have come to be associated with the desire for self-knowledge, including the desire for balance or consistency (Backman, 1988; Pittman & Heller, 1987), for uncertainty reduction (Trope, 1986), for competence (White, 1959), for the ability know the environment (Cofer & Appley, 1964; Swann, 1990), and even for self-actualization (Maslow, 1954) or self-enlightenment (Rogers, 1951). Common among all of these motives is a fundamental desire to construct a meaningful subjective reality (Bartlett, 1932).

Numerous theoretical perspectives have been proffered to explain how individuals acquire self-knowledge, and surprisingly, these accounts have engaged the question of the role of social groups in producing self-knowledge. Common to such well-established theories as social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963), reflected appraisals (Cooley, 1922; Mead, 1934), social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), self-categorization theory (Turner *et al.*, 1987), and impression management (Goffman, 1956) is the assertion that the beliefs of significant others as well as societally held beliefs about an individual's social category memberships shape the self-concept and provide critical information in the self-assessment process. It is relatively well-accepted among self-theorists that self-knowledge, at least to some extent, stems from the relationship between self and the social groups to which one belongs.

A theory that has produced some of the most elegant demonstrations of the ways that self-knowledge is derived from social groups is McGuire's distinctiveness theory (McGuire, 1984; McGuire & McGuire, 1988). According to distinctiveness theory, the features of the self that will be most salient in the self-concept are those that distinguish the self from others. Often, the distinctiveness of self-characteristics will be determined by the numerical composition of individuals in the immediate social situation. In other words, the social context can prime an individual to think of him/herself in terms of group membership. For example, in a study of children's responses to the open-ended prompt, "Tell us about yourself," McGuire and McGuire (1988) found that children describe themselves in terms of characteristics that are distinctive, and therefore salient, in a particular social context. For instance, in a school where the majority of students were white, only 1% of

the white students, but 17% of the African-American students mentioned their race in their spontaneous self-descriptions. Because of African-Americans' minority status in the school, race became a more meaningful self-descriptor for African-American students than for white students. Further, the salience of ethnicity in the self-concept was a function of the ethnic representation in particular classrooms. For example, the percentage of white students who mentioned ethnicity rose significantly when the representation of whites in the classroom dropped below the school average of 80%. These findings not only demonstrate that the size of one's group enlarges and minimizes particular dimensions of self-descriptions, but they also suggest that the self-concept may be quite malleable, changing as a function of the properties of one's social group. Distinctiveness theory has been employed to demonstrate the importance of contextually determined gender salience (Cota & Dion, 1986), age salience (Gfellner, 1986), race salience (Bochner & Ohsako, 1977), and the salience of religious affiliation (Charters & Newcomb, 1952) for self-identification.

Although much of the research has focused on the ways that numerical distinctiveness leads to the salience of group membership, other factors have also been identified. For example, the salience of group membership may be enhanced in situations where the task, rather than the composition of the group, promotes conflict or confrontation with an outgroup (Dion, Earn & Yee, 1978) or enhances group differences (e.g., Brown & Deschamps, 1980), or where the situation places emphasis on important ingroup norms (Boyanowsky & Allen, 1973; Minard, 1952).

A related theory addressing the ways that the contextual salience of group membership can affect the self has already been discussed, that is, self-categorization theory. While research on social identity was ultimately interested in the consequences of self-categorization for self-esteem, this research provided a basis for later work on the cognitive processes involved in conferring a self-definition that is consistent with perceptions of one's group. Self-categorization theory goes beyond distinctiveness theory in that it suggests that not only will group members define themselves in terms of the group (e.g., "I am a woman"), but will also describe the self in terms of group characteristics (e.g., "I am nurturant" or "I am not aggressive"). The idea that increased salience of group membership will produce self-descriptions consistent with the group is not a new notion. In 1943, Lewin suggested that in certain situations where group identity is enhanced, individuals behave and perceive themselves in accord with characteristics of their group. Similarly, self-categorization theory asserts that through self-categorization processes, individuals acquire meaningful information about the self by defining the self as prototypical of the ingroup and differentiated from outgroups. For example, Hogg and Turner (1987) reviewed empirical research that provided indirect evidence for "self-stereotyping." By self-stereotyping, we refer to the systematic conscious or unconscious influence

of beliefs about the attributes of one's own groups on judgments of the self. In their own work, Hogg and Turner (1987) demonstrated that self-stereotyping is most likely to occur when a particular group membership is contextually salient. That is, when group membership (e.g., gender) was highly salient, subjects' self-descriptions were consistent with ingroup stereotypes. Several other studies have since demonstrated the role of contextual salience in self-stereotyping (e.g., Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1991; Simon, Glässner-Bayerl & Stratenwerth, 1991; Simon & Hamilton, 1994). Using both minimal and existing groups, these studies provide evidence for ways that the social context affects conceptions of the self. When one's group membership becomes salient in the social context, often due to relative distinctiveness, one's conception of the self shifts from a unique individual to a stereotypical representation of the social group.

More recently, Brewer (1991, 1993; Brewer, Manzi & Shaw, 1993) has also discussed the importance of relative distinctiveness as a determinant of collective identification, but with a different focus. Brewer maintains that individuals do not strive to be synonymous with the social groups to which they belong. Instead, she asserts that individuals strive to attain a balance between desires for validation and inclusion of the self in larger social collectives and desires for uniqueness and differentiation between the self and others. In other words, individuals are motivated to achieve some level of optimal distinctiveness. In support of optimal distinctiveness theory, Brewer (1991) reviewed research showing that individuals often act in accordance with social identity rather than their personal identity, even when the context is not explicitly depersonalizing. That is, individuals may choose to identify with their group even in the absence of contextual salience. According to optimal distinctiveness theory, such collective identification should be most likely when one is a member of a distinctive or minority group. Minority groups meet individuals' proposed need for inclusion of the self in a larger collective while allowing individuals' to maintain feelings of distinctiveness (by virtue of their minority status).

Because minority status is often confounded with low status, the desire for enhanced self-esteem (as described by social identity theory), may often come into conflict with the desire for distinctiveness. However, in a study examining the effects of ingroup status, ingroup size and depersonalization, Brewer *et al.* (1993) found that both ingroup status and size contributed to positive valuation of the ingroup. That is, high-status majority group members and low-status minority group members evaluated their groups most positively. However, under depersonalized conditions, subjects valued minority group membership over majority group status, regardless of size. Similarly, Simon & Hamilton (1994) report interactive effects of group status and group size. In their study, high-status minority members were more likely to describe themselves in terms of group characteristics than were low-status minority members. However, majority group members were equally

likely to describe group attributes as self-relevant, regardless of group status. Thus, while individuals may look to salient or distinctive group memberships to derive meaningful information about the self, the influence of these groups appears to be qualified by their potential for providing self-enhancing information. These studies suggest that collective identification may be affected by a more complex interplay of motivations for both self-enhancement and self-knowledge than may have been previously suggested.

The knowledge acquired through collective identification extends beyond one's attributes and abilities. For example, social groups appear to provide individuals with guides for behavior (Turner, 1985, 1991; Hogg & Abrams, 1990), attitudes (Turner, 1991), and goals (Geis, Brown, Jennings & Porter, 1984). For example, Geis *et al.* (1984) demonstrated that the salience of gender-stereotypic images affected women's achievement expectations. After exposure to stereotype-consistent images, where women were portrayed in traditional female roles, female subjects were more likely to deemphasize career themes and to emphasize homemaking themes in their own goals for the future. In other words, group stereotypes can be viewed as scripts that contain a host of information not only about what is appropriate to present to the world, but also about how to think and feel about the self.

More recent evidence suggests that self-stereotyping can occur without conscious awareness. Influenced by several lines of research that have now demonstrated that a person's perception can be influenced by stereotypes which are cognitively available but not consciously accessible (see Greenwald & Banaji, 1995 for a review), research on self-stereotyping has explored the ways that stereotypes can implicitly affect self-conceptions and behavior. In a recent study, Levy (1996) explored the implicit effects of stereotypes about old age on memory performance. In this research, elderly subjects were assigned to one of two implicit stereotype conditions. In one condition, subjects were briefly exposed to stereotypes paired with an image of a wise elder or a senile elder. Elderly subjects who had seen the "wise elder" paired with stereotypes showed a subsequent improvement in memory, whereas subjects in the "senile elder" condition experienced a decline in memory. Consistent with previous work on implicit stereotyping, this research supports the hypothesis that stereotypes about one's group can operate without the target's awareness to influence not only self-description but performance as well. In fact, Levy suggests that negative self-stereotyping might be most likely to occur under such implicit conditions where explicit self-protective strategies are unlikely to be employed.

It is possible that performance measures such as those used by Levy (1996) provide some of the strongest evidence for the implicit influence of collectives on the self, since performance may be less susceptible to self-presentation than descriptions of the self. Compelling evidence for the effects of group stereotypes on targets' performance comes from a recent set of

studies by Steele and Aronson (1995). Steele and Aronson (1995) varied the vulnerability of African-American subjects to a racial stereotype about academic achievement (e.g., by asking subjects to record their race on a questionnaire) just prior to taking a difficult academic test. When race was made salient, African-American subjects underperformed white subjects on the test, but performed equally well when the racial stereotype was not invoked. Because the manipulation of racial salience was so subtle, these experiments provide powerful evidence for the subtle influence of groups on the behavior of their members.

The work reviewed up to this point might leave one with the impression that the self is a pliant grouping of fleeting collective identifications, varying from one context to another and influenced by the transient salience of particular group memberships. While these demonstrations are of utmost importance in leading the way away from a static view of the self in favor of a more dynamic and contextually dependent view (see Simon & Hamilton, 1994), it is also likely that there are particular group memberships that have more global, enduring effects on the self. In other words, there may be specific collective identifications that are chronically accessible across situations. The collective aspects of self that have most generally been discussed as chronically accessible are the so-called "master statuses" (Stryker, 1987), such as sex and ethnicity. These ascribed, as opposed to achieved, group memberships may play a more dominant role in shaping self-knowledge as they are enduring aspects of self-knowledge used to categorize oneself, and also ones by which individuals are continually categorized by others. For these reasons, an individual's identification with a central core of group memberships may overshadow the multitude of groups to which she belongs, regardless of the situational salience of less central identities (Breakwell, 1986; Rosenberg, 1981).

In the 1980s, a body of work emerged viewing gender as a personality variable, with individuals assumed to vary in the degree to which they used gender in the way in which they viewed the world. "Gender schemas" were offered as hypothetical cognitive structures which predisposed the individual to process information in gender-related terms and also to shape goals and guide behaviors (see also Markus, Crane, Bernstein & Siladi, 1982). In other words, the pervasive importance of gender in a society can lead individuals to perceive and understand incoming information in terms of this demarcation and to determine appropriate behaviors for the self (as well as for others). This view of the influence of group membership on self-knowledge and behavior may result in the conclusion that such influences are the result of a rather passive process. However, other research suggests that men and women are not passive recipients of social definitions of gender. Instead, the development of a gender identity is an active process which is continually shaped by both personal experience, culturally held (as well as subculturally held) beliefs, and the immediate social context (Ashmore,

1990). Similar arguments have been offered by researchers exploring the development of an ethnic identity (e.g., Cross, 1991; Liebkind, 1992), deaf identity (Bat-Chava, 1992), and gay identity (Coyle, 1992). For example, Ethier & Deaux (1994) demonstrate that not all members of a social category respond identically to a sudden change in the numerical distinctiveness of their group. In their study, Hispanic students who initially had strong ethnic identities responded to entering an Ivy league (predominantly white) university by strengthening their ethnic identification through involvement in cultural activities. However, Hispanic students who initially had weak ethnic identification tended to perceive greater self-related threat in the environment and subsequently further weakened their ethnic identity. This study demonstrates that commitment to a group membership develops over a period of time and that the strength of this commitment will influence perceptions and behaviors in specific social contexts. For some individuals, one group membership may come to be highly influential across situations in determining goals, values, and behaviors while other individuals may not associate strongly with any single identity. The factors that lead to these outcomes are simply not well understood at this time.

Clearly, individuals derive self-knowledge from the social groups to which they belong. However, it is less clear whether this is a primary motivation for collective identification. Further research must address this issue directly. While several studies of the personal (rather than collective) self-concept have attempted to test a self-esteem hypothesis against a self-knowledge hypothesis (e.g., Swann, Griffin, Predmore & Gaines, 1987; Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi & Gilbert, 1990; Swann, Pelham & Krull, 1989), very little research has attempted a similar critical test of the collective self (although see Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1991). Further research is also needed to delineate the conditions under which the collective self is likely to serve these varied motives. In reality, it is likely that collective identifications are useful for both self-enhancement and for gaining self-knowledge. As well, there may be a host of other motives that are served by collective identification. For example, Hogg and Abrams (1993) suggest that individuals are motivated to attain power and control, affiliation, and self-efficacy. Very little, if any research has explored the ways in which identifying with social groups might satisfy these goals.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, social psychologists have taken quite seriously the task of empirically demonstrating the ways in which collectives create or influence a sense of self. The formidable challenge lay in the creation of experiments to observe the relationship that psychologists and sociologists from an earlier generation had proposed but not tested. Focusing attention on two related

processes where such an influence may be observed, we found that a substantial and growing literature now exists in response to this challenge. Research on self-enhancement and self-knowledge shows that relatively straightforward notions of how social groups come to influence and create a sense of self are rapidly rendered complex by demonstrations that group membership does not have a simple and, as yet, fully predictable influence on self and identity.

Research using experimentally created groups confirms that group status can and does produce self-enhancement and may indeed be one of the bases for group affiliation. Research using existing group memberships, however, also suggests that the relationship may be more complex. In particular, future research must look to the counterintuitive finding that membership in low-status groups does not necessarily lead to reduced self-esteem, at least as it is typically measured using scales that assess consciously accessible esteem. Regarding self-knowledge, the findings also show how collectives influence the way in which one comes to describe and view oneself. Here too, the evidence suggests that the group to which one belongs can significantly influence the self-descriptions that emerge and the choices and preferences that come to be adopted, with or without awareness of such influences. On the other hand, this research also suggests that the manner in which one negotiates a sense of self and identity is an active process that involves adopting as well as distancing from the attributes of one's social group. The relationship is unlikely to be a simple one where self comes to mirror the collective, and future research will need to probe more deeply into both the conscious and unconscious ways in which the collective shapes the individual.

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