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UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY

What It Is and What It Does

PATRIOTISM IS, FIRST OF ALL, the assertion of a certain sort of identification. Specifically, it is a form of commitment to a particular national identity. The common view of identity, at least of national identity, is that it is best understood as a way of life. Thus, a patriot is someone committed to a particular society's culture, institutions, political philosophy. But there are numerous problems with this view. First, no society has a single way of life. Different segments of society have different rights, privileges, obligations, and restrictions. Moreover, patriotism is often affirmed most acutely in times of international conflict, thus in opposition to a national enemy. But the national enemy, too, does not represent a single, invariant way of life. Indeed, in some cases, a patriot for one side may have greater sympathy with certain ideas and practices on the enemy side. However, he or she is, it seems, unlikely to recognize such sympathy if the practices are explicitly associated with the enemy side. Consider, for example, the recent conflict between the United States and France over the Iraq war. Obviously, the United States and France were not themselves at war. However, in the United States,

it was widely considered patriotic to oppose all things French—hence, for example, the spectacle of Americans pouring out bottles of French wine. The crux of this conflict was the French view of the situation in Iraq. However, when Americans were presented with a statement of the French position on Iraq, they largely agreed with it. Or, rather, they largely agreed *as long as the position was not identified as French*.¹ As this example suggests, the crucial factor for a patriot is not the position or practice of his or her country, nor the position or practice of the enemy. Rather, the crucial factor is the labels, the names attached to those positions and practices.

The same point applies to ethnic, religious, and other group loyalties. I suspect that most Catholics do not have a strong commitment to the defining theological positions of their church. But, depending on the degree of their commitment to a Catholic identity, they would be inclined to favor positions labeled “Catholic” and to demur from positions labeled “Protestant.” This is true whether the labeling is direct (“Catholics believe that . . .”) or implied. For example, I suspect that many Catholics would accept the doctrine of papal infallibility or that of the Immaculate Conception, and that many Protestants would reject them, because they know to associate these doctrines with Catholicism. On the other hand, at least some of the Protestants may agree to the statement “Mary was born without sin,” if they are not told that this is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Conversely, many Catholics seem unaware of just what the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is.

This distinction between mere labels and ways of life (encompassing cultural practices, political institutions, and so forth) is crucial for understanding national or any other sort of group identification. Contrary to our intuitions, the labels are the more consequential of the two. In the following pages, I set out this division in more technical terms, examining its implications for group formation. Specifically, the first section considers

1. For example, CBS News polls on February 10–12, February 24–25, March 4–5, and March 7–9, 2003, all show a majority of Americans saying that the United States should not “take military action fairly soon,” but should “wait and give the United Nations and weapons inspectors more time.” A FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll on February 11–12, 2003 explained that “France and Germany have made a proposal that would put United Nations troops in Iraq to back up the inspectors, increase the number of inspectors, and give inspections a longer time to work.” Only 37% of those polled felt this was a “good plan.” Moreover, when faced with the statement that “Several U.S. allies, such as France, Germany, and Russia, oppose taking military action against Iraq at this time,” only 18% agreed; 77% disagreed with these allies, including 35% who were “Angry that [France, Germany, and Russia] are not supporting the United States.” (For the poll data, see www.pollingreport.com; on the French position, see, for example, the “Joint declaration by France, Russia and Germany on Iraq” [February 10, 2003], available at www.iraqcrisis.co.uk.)

the operation of labels or categorial identities and their difference from practical identities (roughly, our individual, interpersonally coordinated forms of life—our routines, capacities, expectations, and so forth). It argues that group oppositions or conflicts are not primarily a matter of practical incompatibilities (the so-called clash of cultures). Instead, they are fundamentally a matter of mere labeling or vacuous categorization. In connection with this, I outline the cognitive and neurocognitive structures underlying these two forms of identity. The next section examines the interaction between categorial identity and practical identity. Specifically, it addresses the effects of categorial identification on the diversity or homogeneity of practical identities in a given group. Subsequent parts treat group inclusion criteria (i.e., ways of defining who has what categorial identity), the formation of in-group and out-group prototypes (or stereotypes), the development of group ideals, and the operation of structures of authority within identity groups. The last two sections consider what happens when we face contradictions among our identity categories (e.g., what happens when we encounter a conflict between our national and religious identities). The first of these sections sets out the most common nationalist strategies for dealing with potentially divided loyalties. The final section outlines five critical parameters governing which identity category comes to dominate our thought and action in cases of conflict. Throughout these analyses, I draw on a range of sources from cognitive science, neurobiology, social psychology, political economy, and elsewhere, which, I argue, provide converging evidence for the present account of identity.

CATEGORIAL IDENTITIES AND PRACTICAL IDENTITIES

In the preceding paragraphs, I treated a basic division in identity through the use of ordinary language terms and commonsense ideas. I spoke about “ways of life” and “labels.” Here, I need to introduce some more technical terms. What I initially referred to as a way of life roughly approximates what I have elsewhere called “practical identity.” Practical identity is the set of habits, skills, concepts, ideas, and so forth, which allow me to act physically and mentally, most importantly insofar as such action bears on interaction with others.² More technically, practical identity is the complex

2. The idea of practical identity is related to the notion of the *habitus* as developed by Bourdieu and others. This idea has been taken up by theorists of nationalism. For example, Treibel discusses the ways in which the *habitus* cultivated by schooling in the Federal

of representations and procedural competences that enable my thought and action. In the following pages, I am concerned only with that part of practical identity that bears, not on isolated or wholly private activities, but on fluid interaction with others. Obviously, this is a complex concept and requires some unpacking.

As I noted in the introduction, our “cognitive architecture” or the organization of our minds involves several components. To a great extent, these components are universal. For example, we all have episodic and semantic memories (see Schacter 17, 134–35), that is, memories of particular events and memories of concepts. However, some components are not universal. For example, there are differences in the contents of our episodic and semantic memories, thus the precise events and concepts we remember. Memory contents may be divided into memories that we recall in thought and memories that we enact—on the one hand, memories of what happened at a certain time, what something means, and so on, and, on the other hand, memories of how to do something. The former are *representational* memories. The latter are *procedural* memories (or “skills”; see Johnson-Laird 156). The memory of my last birthday dinner or the meaning of “anapest” is representational. The memory of how to ride a bicycle is procedural. When I “activate” a representational memory, I think about that memory. When I activate a procedural memory, I engage in a certain activity (e.g., ride a bicycle).

Representational memories may be further subdivided into schemas, prototypes, and exempla. *Schemas* are broad structures that give general conditions for an object, event, or action.³ *Prototypes* are standard cases. *Exempla* are particular instances. (Obviously, all our episodic memories are exempla in this sense, for they are particular, experiential instances—of, for example, birthday dinners.) A great deal of research indicates that we tend to think most consistently through prototypes or standard cases (see Holland et al. 182ff. and citations). For example, when we identify something as a bird, we do not (in ordinary life) begin with an abstract schema for birdness. Nor do we begin with particular instances (e.g., Polly, my pet canary). Rather, we begin with a standard case. In identifying birds, think-

Republic of Germany was different from that developed by schooling in the German Democratic Republic (322). The two concepts differ in their precise extension and theoretical specification.

3. When a schema concerns a relatively routine set of actions (with defaults, alternatives, and so forth), it is often referred to as a *script*. Thus, we might refer to the script for going to a restaurant (to take the standard example). The classical discussion of scripts is to be found in Schank and Abelson. For a brief overview of the current understanding of scripts, see Schank.

ing about birds, talking about birds, we begin with an idea of birds that is roughly “things like robins.” In other words, we have some idea of a prototypical bird (which, it turns out, is very similar to a robin). That prototype serves us as a default. Unless we are given reason to think differently about birds (e.g., if we are doing ornithology), we stick with this prototype.⁴

In contrast with representations, procedures are generally understood as purely schematic. In other words, cognitive scientists do not generally refer to procedural prototypes or exempla. Rather, they refer only to procedural schemas. Of course, these schemas must be broad and flexible enough to accommodate a range of prototypical and nonprototypical objects and unusual instances (e.g., the procedural schema for riding a bicycle should allow us to ride different sorts of bicycles).⁵

Practical identity is someone’s entire set of representational and procedural structures, most importantly insofar as these enable his or her interaction with others. Thus, two people share practical identity to the degree that their representational and procedural memories enable them to achieve common purposes. Suppose Smith needs to find the nearest hospital and asks Doe. Doe then gives Smith directions. This is a routine interaction. But it is very complicated. Doe must understand Smith’s request and must be able to give Smith the information in a way Smith will understand. This involves a shared language. It also involves shared practical presuppositions—such as how to drive and what sorts of things one is likely to notice or miss while driving (as when Doe says, “get into the right lane immediately or you’ll miss the turn”).

Practical identity is only partially shared by any group of people. Moreover, one (partially) shares different practical identities with different groups. I share an ability to discuss cognitive science with some people,

4. In fact, things are not as simple as this suggests. Complex issues surround the precise nature of prototypes. For example, some writers reject the idea that there are prototypes, instead seeing only “prototype effects” (see, for example, Lakoff, *Women*). There are also differences between writers who discuss prototypes or prototype effects in terms of representations or symbols and writers who discuss prototypes or prototype effects in terms of neural networks (for an influential case of the latter sort, see Rogers and McClelland on “typicality” and “typicality effects” [198–204]; for an intermediate case, see Barsalou). I have discussed some of these issues elsewhere (see *The Mind* 58–60n.2). Here and below, I tend to adopt a representationalist idiom, even when drawing on neurobiological research. However, so far as I can tell, nothing in my argument rests on adopting a particular view of the cognitive existence of prototypes. Moreover, my personal view is that intentional, representational or symbolic, connectionist or subsymbolic, and neurobiological accounts can all be valid, capturing different patterns at different levels of analysis (see Hogan, “On the Very Idea”).

5. For further discussion of procedural and representational schemas, see my *Cognitive Science* 44–45.

a (limited) ability to play water polo with others. My competence in English is broadly shared by other English speakers. But here, too, there are differences. Indeed, language is a prime case of practical identity—and it perfectly illustrates the way that such identity is incompletely shared. We tend to think that language is simply held in common by a given speech community. But even brief reflection on our differences in, say, vocabulary, shows that this is not true. Moreover, there are theoretical reasons for recognizing this. For example, Noam Chomsky has stressed that “a person’s language should be defined” as “the grammar represented in his/her mind” (*Rules* 120; see also *Knowledge* 25). The point is made even by sociolinguists, such as Hudson, who writes that “*no two speakers have the same language*” (12; emphasis in original).

Of course, many features of one’s practical identity are more likely to be shared by people within one’s own society than by people outside that society. Thus, the way I speak, drive, eat, gesture, and make presumptions about social space are all likely to fit better with the ways other people do these things in my own society than with the way people in other societies do them. However, this is never entirely uniform. For example, my presumptions and ways of arguing about the war in Iraq are, it seems, much closer to those most common in Africa or Asia than to those most common in the United States.

We are ordinarily not self-conscious about practical identity. We tend to become aware of practical identity at points where it breaks down. In other words, we do not usually become aware of shared practical identity, but only of different practical identities. At a family reunion in Missouri, a cousin expects me to be able to discuss the results of the most recent Superbowl, but I am only vaguely aware that it has even occurred. In India, my sister-in-law sends me into the kitchen with some clicking apparatus, evidently expecting me to light the stove, but I have no idea what to do with it. In cases such as these, we become aware that there is some sort of practical discrepancy. When it has a national pattern (e.g., when many people from one society exhibit the same inability to light a stove), we say that it is a cultural difference. When there is a pattern within a nation, we might refer to it as a regional or class difference. In any event, practical identity comes to our attention only through individual cases, and those individual cases are most often negative. (In some cases, we may expect differences in practical identity. Then we will become aware of practical identity in individual cases where it is shared—for instance, if we encounter someone who happens to speak English in a remote Chinese village. We will consider cases of this sort further below.)

Categorial identity, in contrast, is any group membership that I take to be definitive of who I am. It is the way I locate myself socially—as American, Irish, Catholic, or whatever. It is what I answer when I am asked questions about my identity. The crucial thing here is that an identity-specifying group membership is defined, in the first place, only by a name. As I have already suggested, it is, roughly, a form of labeling. More exactly, categorial identification is the acceptance of a category label as a representation of what one is, as a name for some crucially important quality of one's nature. The label names this quality by placing one in a group with other people who share that quality. It may be religious, ethnic, national, a matter of sex or sexual orientation, or something else. In any case, it is critical for one's self-concept, and it defines an in-group—along with an out-group of people who do not share the quality in question.

There are obviously relations between practical identity and categorial identity. If Jones identifies categorially as a gay man, that almost certainly means that he has some aspects of practical identity in common with other categorially identified gay men. Specifically, it indicates that he finds men sexually attractive, that he is disposed to pursue men or, in particular cases, to respond favorably to sexual pursuit by men. However, it is crucial that the categorial and practical identity are by no means the same. I was once at a psychoanalytic conference where an analyst was speaking about two patients. One, he explained, regularly went out and had sex with men. The other had had a single homosexual encounter many years earlier. The first man adamantly refused to identify himself as gay. The second man, in contrast, did identify himself as gay—with great feelings of guilt. One might argue that these men were misconstruing their own propensities due to the homophobia of the larger society. That seems perfectly reasonable, and probably correct. However, it does not affect the fact that the relation between practical identity and categorial identity is not direct; it does not affect the fact that these two cases clearly illustrate the discrepancy between practical and categorial identity. Moreover, even when two men say that they are gay and routinely act on their sexual preference, it does not follow that anything else in their practical identities is shared. Their precise sexual preferences, the ways in which they act on those preferences, the precise nature of their interests and enjoyments—none of this has to be the same (cf. Butler 17). Indeed, queer theory has repeatedly emphasized such diversity (see, for example, Cohen).

Of course, the fact that categorial identification diverges from practical identity does not warrant the conclusion that they are unrelated. Taking up the case of sexual preference, one might argue that categorial

identification, at least in this case, is not solely a matter of labeling. It has some content. That is true. But it is important to recognize that the content is very limited. Moreover, in other cases, that content may be entirely absent. Research has shown that in-group/out-group divisions can be created with no practical group differences whatsoever. Test subjects have been assigned to two groups based on an explicitly arbitrary principle (e.g., the penultimate digit of their social security numbers). They did not know one another before the groups were determined and they were not allowed to interact with one another after the groups were determined. As a result, the groups were indistinguishable in terms of practical identity. Nonetheless, in their judgments and actions, the subjects identified with their in-group, showing the standard prejudices in favor of in-group members and against out-group members (see Hirschfeld 1 and Duckitt 68–69).⁶ In other experiments, researchers tested whether or not subjects discriminated on the basis of similarity (roughly, practical identity) in the way they did on the basis of group membership (categorical identity). As Horowitz summarizes, there was “no statistically significant tendency to discriminate on the basis of similarity. Plainly, what counts is group membership and not demonstrated similarity” (145).⁷

Neurobiological research converges with social psychological research on these points. First of all, it suggests that we categorize individuals very quickly in terms of at least certain in-group/out-group divisions, prominently those that involve high visual salience. Mitchell et al. explain that the medial prefrontal cortex is strongly activated when one simulates another person’s mind—thus when one views that person as an intending subject, parallel to oneself. They undertook a study of medial prefrontal activation in subjects looking at photographs of faces. The research demonstrated that “activity in the medial [prefrontal cortex] was higher for faces that participants judged to be” like themselves “than for faces judged to be” unlike themselves (77). Clearly, judgments of likeness in this

6. One might ask, “What made an individual feel she or he was part of Group A other than being assigned to that group?” This is an excellent question, for it gets to the heart of these studies. The answer is *nothing*. Merely being told that you, Jones, Smith, and so on, constitute Group A, while Doe, Jenkins, and so on, constitute Group B, produces in-group/out-group prejudice (e.g., more favorable evaluations of other people assigned to Group A, relative to those assigned to Group B). That is precisely the point of the experiments.

7. Horowitz is perhaps the most important writer in this general area of political analysis to have drawn on social psychological research to discuss politically consequential group divisions—in his case, ethnic groups in conflict. In this way, Horowitz’s book is an important precursor to the present study. However, his concerns are rather different and his use of this research is more limited—and necessarily not combined with cognitive neuroscientific research that has taken place in the intervening two decades.

context cannot refer to propensities and preferences, hence practical identity. Given only photographs, the participants were able to judge only physical likeness or unlikeness, thus such categorial properties as race.

Work by Ito and her colleagues extends these points. These researchers set out to consider a real political problem—the killing of unarmed black men by police. By measuring electrocortical activity, they were able to demonstrate that “attention is directed to race and gender cues at early processing stages regardless of the dimension to which participants are explicitly attending” (193). Moreover, responses to blacks suggested “initial covert orienting to targets heuristically associated with the greater potential for threat” as early as 100 to 200 milliseconds after exposure to the image (193). The point is related to the finding there is “greater amygdala activation to racial out-group than in-group faces” (196, citing work by Wheeler and Fiske). The amygdala activation suggests either heightened fear or anger, or both. (On fear and the amygdala, see LeDoux and Phelps; on anger, see Panksepp, “Emotions” 144, 146–47). Note, again, that this cannot be a function of practical identity of the people in the photographs. Given the test conditions, it is necessarily a matter of their categorial identity.

These cognitive and emotional points have practical consequences. Kunda cites research indicating that “the mere exposure to an African American face can suffice for other Americans to activate the construct of hostility, which, in turn, can lead them to behave in a more hostile manner” (321). She goes on to summarize studies in which such in-group/out-group divisions had harmful effects on behavior toward African Americans in job interviews (323).

Other work brings speech into the analysis. As Nusbaum and Small explain, citing research by D. L. Rubin, “for Caucasians, seeing an Asian face identified as a talker reduces the intelligibility and comprehensibility of a speech signal, compared with seeing a Caucasian face . . . paired with the same speech” (142–43). Here, the researcher explicitly controlled for practical identity by using the same speech. We can only conclude that the discrepancy in response is purely categorial.

While all this is bad enough, other research points to even more disturbing consequences. For example, in a simulation discussed by Ito and her colleagues, “Behavioral results showed a consistent bias against blacks relative to whites. Participants were faster and more accurate in ‘shooting’ armed blacks compared with armed whites. By contrast, they were faster and more accurate in ‘not shooting’ unarmed whites than unarmed blacks” (198, citing work by Correll et al.). Differences extend even to responses

that follow the discovery that one has made an error—for example, in “shooting” an unarmed black (200).

Though much of this research has focused on race or ethnicity, the divisions at issue are not confined to race and ethnicity. Ito et al. refer more generally to “automatically encoded social category cues” (204), which is to say, in-group/out-group divisions. Moreover, responses to out-groups are not confined to fear-related amygdala activation, but may include, for example, disgust-related insula activation.⁸ Krendl et al. used functional magnetic resonance imaging to investigate brain activity in response to several visually isolable, but nonracial out-groups (e.g., transsexuals). They found that these stigmatized groups tend to elicit amygdala and insula activation, suggesting fear, disgust, or other forms of aversion. This response was more robust in implicit conditions (i.e., conditions that did not involve any explicit evaluation of the person from the stigmatized out-group). However, those implicit conditions may be more significant. As Krendl et al. explain, “Implicit attitudes have consistently been shown to be more accurate predictors of affective state than explicit attitudes because we are highly motivated to inhibit societally undesirable explicit attitudes” (13; we will return to the issue of inhibition below).

In sum, as Fiske, Harris, and Cuddy put it, “Categorization of people as interchangeable members of an outgroup promotes an amygdala response characteristic of vigilance and alarm and an insula response characteristic of disgust or arousal” (1482–83).

We can, of course, observe the same patterns, if necessarily less clearly, in real political life, outside controlled studies. Consider, for example, the identity category “Hindu,” which is deeply important in Indian national politics today. B. R. Ambedkar, chair of the committee that drafted India’s constitution (see Wolpert, *New* 356), wrote that “Hindu society is a myth. The name ‘Hindu’ . . . was given by the Mohamedans to the natives for the purpose of distinguishing themselves” (quoted in Sharma 37). Partha Chatterjee argues that “‘Hindu-ness’ . . . cannot be . . . defined by any religious criteria at all. There are no specific beliefs or practices that characterize this ‘Hindu’” (110). Much of Indian politics today is animated by the sharp opposition between Hindu and Muslim. But as Nandy et al. point out, “Even religious divisions within the two aggregates [‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’] often bear ‘peculiar’ relationships with divisions within the other community. Thus, the Pranami sect in Gujarat (the one in which Gandhi was born) is

8. The practical importance of disgust in the treatment of out-groups has been explored valuably by Nussbaum. See, for example, her discussion of disgust in anti-Semitism and homophobia (*Upheavals* 347–49).

in many ways closer to Islam than it is to many other sects within Hinduism; likewise, most versions of Sindhi Hinduism look terribly Islamic to many South Indian Hindus and many Muslim communities in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Bengal look disturbingly Hindu to Muslims in other parts of India” (51–52). Pascal Boyer makes a similar point. Speaking of Java, he writes that “the division between Muslim, Javanist and Hindu is to some extent internal to most individuals. That is, the various viewpoints and normative ideals that can be identified with these different traditions are tools that people combine [in practical identity] much more freely than a description in terms of affiliation [i.e., categorial identification] would suggest” (268).

But suppose there are riots in India. Will the Pranami Hindus join with Muslims while the Rajasthani Muslims join with Hindus? Will people join together with others in a community of shared practical identity? No, not at all. They will join together on the basis of prominent identity categories—in this case, “Hindu” and “Muslim.” Tacitly recognizing the individual, idiolectal character of practical identity, Gandhi once wrote that “In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals” (quoted in Daniel 57). But categorial identification supersedes this individuality, segmenting our identifications into “Muslim,” “Hindu,” “Christian,” and so forth, independent of our practical similarities and differences.

In order to clarify my argument here, it may be useful to contrast my claims with those of two writers who have recently addressed related topics—Bruce Wexler, a neurocognitive researcher and psychiatrist, and Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate in economics. Wexler has treated neuroscience and culture in a very valuable way. He is undoubtedly correct that intergroup conflicts can result from “internal neuropsychological structures created to conform with an individual’s sensory and interpersonal environment at the time of development” (228). However, he does not distinguish between practical and categorial identity. As a result, he assumes that the relevant neuropsychological structures are a matter of culture, thus practical identity. In keeping with this, he writes that “Most of the violent conflicts raging around the world today are between peoples of different cultures and belief systems: Protestants versus Catholics in Northern Ireland; Muslims versus Hindus in India and Pakistan,” and so forth (246). Though this analysis has intuitive plausibility, the research cited above indicates that it takes the wrong type of identity to be causally important. As we will discuss below, there are circumstances when conflicts in practical identity are consequential. However, they are consequential only in making categorial identities salient. When Ram and Narayan find their

attitudes and habits incompatible, they are likely to understand this as a purely personal conflict. However, when Ram and Ali have the same experience, there is a good chance that they will become more aware of their different religious categories, even if these are entirely irrelevant to the practical incompatibilities. Thus, even when cultural differences exist and have social consequences, they have those consequences as a result of categorial identifications. In short, even here, the crucial factor is categorial identity.

My view is closer to that of Amartya Sen, who also treats Hindu-Muslim communalism. However, there are some significant differences. Sen rightly emphasizes the multiplicity of any given person's identities. But he is right in two very different ways. Each of us has multiple competencies and inclinations, thus multiple practical identities. In addition, each of us may be categorized or labeled in many ways. Though there are points where Sen begins to touch on this difference, he does not fully articulate it. As a result, his treatment of the nature of identity is never entirely clear. Thus, Sen writes of his "disturbing memories of Hindu-Muslim riots in India in the 1940s," which "include seeing . . . the massive identity shifts that followed divisive politics. A great many persons' identities as Indians, as subcontinentals, as Asians, or as members of the human race, seemed to give way—quite suddenly—to sectarian identification with Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh communities" (9–10). Such changes, of course, need to be explained. Part of what I hope to do in this book is explain how such changes occur. But it should already be clear that they are allowed by the fact that the "identities" in question are only labels. None is a matter of actual cultural practice. In other words, the problem is not simply one of people failing to recognize that they have numerous real (thus practical) identities. It is a matter of people organizing the social world into categorial identities at all.

Sen's memory of the Hindu-Muslim riots leads us to a more general point. The discrepancy between practical and categorial identity suggests why one type of identity may change without affecting the other. Practices alter while categories continue unchanged; categories shift while practices remain. At least for certain sorts of category, categorial identity changes more readily than practical identity. Indeed, change in categorial identification is often undertaken directly by political activists. Feminist educators seek to develop a categorial identification among women as women. Marxist "consciousness raising" sets out, among other things, to create a categorial identification of all workers as workers. Nationalist activists work to spread national identification throughout a society. The other side of this is

that, once established, such categorial identifications may be unstable. In many cases, the effort to secure a certain sort of categorial identification (e.g., class or national identification) must be constantly renewed.

In a very general way, some of these points have been recognized by writers on nationalism and related topics. As just noted, Sen touches on these ideas in places. For example, he remarks that identity “categorization” may be “arbitrary,” and he quotes Pierre Bourdieu on the way that “social action can end up ‘producing a difference when none existed’” (27; quoting Bourdieu 160). But even here, there is ambiguity. The phrase “producing a difference” can mean one of two things. In the present analysis, it is important to distinguish between making a difference in practical identity and making a difference in categorial identity.

Sometimes parallel observations arise in connection with the analysis of a particular national or subnational group. For example, Wachtel maintains that people belong to a nation, “not because of any objective identifying criteria such as common language, history, or cultural heritage . . . but because they think they do” (2). Actually, things are more complex than this, but this rightly suggests that national identity categories can have little or even no content. Speaking of the former Yugoslavia, Wachtel writes that “no one at the turn of the nineteenth century would have identified him- or herself as a Yugoslav, whereas studies in the 1960s showed that the majority of the country’s citizens held some form of Yugoslav national identity. Beginning in the late 1960s, however, the idea lost popularity precipitously, and at present it is preserved almost exclusively in the consciousness of émigrés scattered thinly all over the world” (1).

Along the same lines, Kasfir points out that many criteria have been used to define national groups—“Language, territory, social structure, cultural patterns, external administrative classification, and an active sense of identification” (56). Note that language, social structure, and cultural patterns are all components of practical identity. In contrast, the “sense of identification” refers to categorial identity. Kasfir goes on to state that “an active sense of identification with a particular group”—thus categorial identification—is “the most conclusive indicator of political behavior.” This is why, for example, “Batoro and Banyoro regard themselves as separate ‘tribes’ . . . in spite of speaking the same language and sharing the same customs.” In contrast, “some groups, such as the Baamba, speak two languages . . . and speakers of one may not be able to understand speakers of the other” (57). How, then, do such categorial definitions come about? Kasfir points to colonial administrative categories. “The use of ‘tribal’ classifications in gathering census information and establishing

county and district boundaries,” he argues, “has reified ethnic consciousness along official lines” (61). Speaking of the Congo, Olorunsola comes to similar conclusions. Subnational conflicts there derive from “ethnic identities and antagonisms.” However, these “have a relatively short history.” Specifically, “Ethnic labels were learned by the Belgians and applied to various peoples. Such labels were used to unify or divide a people and to distinguish favored ethnic groups from the less ‘desirable’ allies” (191). Put simply, the divisions are the result of labeling, not discrepancies in practical identity.⁹

As these references to religious riots and ethnic antagonisms suggest, and as the neurocognitive studies attest, categorial identifications—thus in-group/out-group divisions—involve a strong emotional component and are highly motivating. Indeed, they frequently overrule self-interest. The point is supported by a great deal of social psychological research. As Monroe, Hankin, and van Vechten put it, “The thousands of experiments underlying social identity theory have consistently shown that individuals identify with the in-group, support group norms, and derogate out-group members along stereotypical lines, even when there is no individual gain at stake” (435). Indeed, in-group bias holds even in cases where there is individual loss. As Duckitt summarizes, “group members . . . seek maximum relative advantage for the ingroup over the outgroup, even when this interferes with the achievement of maximum absolute outcomes for the subjects.” Moreover, in some studies, subjects “are categorized into minimal groups,” that is, arbitrary groups distinguished only by name (e.g. “A” and “B”). In these studies, when members of one group “are given the opportunity to discriminate [against members of other groups], they . . . show increased self-esteem” (Duckitt 85). In keeping with this, T. A. Wills has argued that “downward comparison,” that is, comparison with inferiors in a hierarchy, is highly consequential for one’s self-evaluation; thus we “can increase [our] subjective well-being through comparison with a less fortunate other” (245).

These points hold directly for national identification. For example, Greenfeld explains that the modern sense of “[n]ationality elevated every member of the community which it made sovereign. It guaranteed status. *National identity is, fundamentally, a matter of dignity.* It gives people reasons to be proud” (487; emphasis in original). The research on in-group definition agrees with Greenfeld, except on her claim about sovereignty. Intuitively, one might expect that group membership would bestow a sense of dignity only insofar as one is somehow responsible for the achievements

9. Of course, none of this is to say that labeling is, in general practice, a simple or wholly arbitrary matter. For example, on some complexities of the labeling process in colonial Africa, see Hastings 148–66.

of the group—here, only insofar as one participates in the governance of the nation as a citizen. People undoubtedly do have democratic aspirations, desires to have a say in matters of importance to them (though the aspirations are somewhat more complicated than one might initially imagine; see Baer and Jaros). However, their pride in a group does not seem to rest on such participation. Consider sports teams. Ortony, Clore, and Collins explain that “in a series of studies Cialdini et al. (1976) found that after a victory of their college football team, students were more likely to wear school colors, and were more likely to use the first person pronoun, ‘we,’ than the third person pronoun, ‘they,’ in referring to the football team” (136). In short, they were more likely to feel proud. It makes no difference whatsoever that they had nothing to do with the team’s victory. Greenfeld goes on to link self-esteem with categorial identification more simply, stating that, “It would be a strong statement, but no overstatement, to say that the world in which we live was brought into being by vanity” (488) and “Nationality makes people feel good” (490). Earlier, Greenfeld had cited Tocqueville to the same effect. Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America* that “For the last fifty years no pains have been spared to convince the inhabitants of the United States that they are the only religious, enlightened, and free people . . . hence they conceive a high opinion of their superiority and are not very remote from believing themselves to be a distinct species of mankind” (quoted in Greenfeld 444). Tocqueville sees this as a specifically American inclination. The details no doubt differ from group to group and country to country. But the general feeling is part of all in-group definition.

The flip side of in-group pride is the denigration of out-groups. Thinking that we are good goes along with thinking they are bad. Believing that we are trustworthy is consequential only insofar as we think of them as untrustworthy. Viewing ourselves as benevolent is continuous with viewing them as malevolent. Thus Monroe, Hankin, and van Vechten explain that, according to “social identity theory . . . genocide and racism may in fact be extreme manifestations of normal group identification and behavior” (436). We have already seen that ample neuroscientific research is consistent with this conclusion.

DEFINING IDENTITY GROUPS AND ORGANIZING CULTURAL PRACTICES

Yet, despite my emphasis up to this point, in-group definition does not result from the mere existence of labels—national, ethnic, or whatever.

It is not even a simple matter of someone identifying himself or herself with a particular label, believing that the label defines something essential about him or her. For anyone to function as part of a particular in-group, it must be possible to isolate members of that group. One need not be able to isolate all of them, or to isolate them with absolute certainty all the time. However, one must have a general ability to differentiate in-group members from out-group members. Thus, every functional identity category must comprise not only a label, but an inclusion criterion.¹⁰

This inclusion criterion may be otherwise vacuous. It may involve no information beyond the bare principle that says who falls into the category and who does not. Moreover, that inclusion criterion may be entirely arbitrary, as in the “minimal group” studies mentioned earlier. On the other hand, vacuous and/or arbitrary categorial identifications tend to be extremely unstable. They continually risk disruption. This is where practical identity enters again. We expect certain behavioral, linguistic, conceptual, attitudinal, and other continuities within identification groups. Put differently, we tend to expect a certain degree of connection between categorial and practical identity. When expected continuities of practical identity fail, that failure produces a sense of alienation. A very similar point is made by Treibel in her discussion of reunified Germany. She writes that “The ‘We’”—marking people’s shared categorial identification as Germans—“sounds strange” (319; my translation). She goes on to explain that “After reunification, the new experience of strangeness confirmed that the East German habitus [thus, practical identity] and the West German habitus had developed ever further away from one another” (320). When repeated across a number of cases, that sense of alienation can create fissures in categorial identification. An obvious example of this is language in nationality. When individuals in two subnational groups cannot communicate through a shared language, some sense of mutual alienation may result. The alienation is likely to worsen when the clash in practical identities extends to conflicts over governmental language, the language of schools, and so forth.¹¹

10. The inclusion criterion is related to the notion of social closure, set forth by Max Weber and recently taken up by Andreas Wimmer. Social closure defines the boundary between the in-group and the out-group. Moreover, it is a general concept, covering “ethnic groups, nations, social classes, estates, village communities and so on” (Wimmer 8). However, as Wimmer’s discussion makes clear, it involves a more extensive and elaborated set of in-group connections than I envision here.

11. The point is far from merely academic. As Spolsky points out, “countries monolingual in both practice and management are quite rare” (159). Ways of resolving the problems that arise from this situation are far from obvious, as Spolsky’s work makes clear.

The result of “practical alienation,” as we may call it, is twofold. First, it tends to challenge the categorial identification on which we based our initial expectations of shared practical identity. For example, encountering linguistic incompatibilities may lead us to question our assumption of shared national identity. This may lead us to question the centrality of the shared category for our own national identity, as when conflicts over language led many Francophone Canadians to question their own Canadianness. Alternatively, encountering practical incompatibilities may lead us to question the appropriateness of using the initial category to include members of the other group. For example, conflicts over language may lead Anglophone Americans to question the Americanness of Spanish speakers. The second result of practical alienation is the converse of this. Such alienation enhances our awareness of categories that align more adequately with our practical identity, at least in the particular area of alienation. Thus, a conflict over language may lead us to become more aware of our identification with a language category. For example, when Gujarati speakers and Marathi speakers conflict in Mumbai, that is likely to make members of each group more conscious of, and thus more committed to, their linguistic category.

Before examining this alienation further, we need to back up for a moment and consider the ways in which categorial identification develops initially. Any group category defines some in-group/out-group division. However, people are not equally aware of all such categories, nor are they equally committed to all of them. I live in Connecticut. Thus, I necessarily have some sort of Connecticut-based protoidentification. But it really has no great motivating force for me right now. On the other hand, the protoidentification is there and that could serve as the basis for a strong sense of Connecticut identity. In keeping with this, protonationalist feelings may be widespread in a population. However, full-fledged nationalist feelings and commitments do not simply arise on their own in an entire population. So, what happens? Commonly, full-blown nationalist commitments arise in a few people who undertake the conversion of others to their attitude. Thus, nationalist movements—for example, anticolonial nationalist movements—commonly begin with a limited number of activists who work to create a sense of national identification in the populace as a whole.¹² This

12. A number of writers have stressed the importance of activists for the development of nationalism. For example, “the class of literati and urban professionals that formed the nuclei of nationalist movements” (Wimmer 75) are critical for Wimmer’s account. Similarly, David Brown stresses the importance of elites, particularly “displaced traditional elites” and “aspiring educated elites” (27), in certain sorts of nationalism. He convincingly demonstrates their

is not to say that activists are necessary. Nationalist identifications may arise spontaneously through complex, unplanned developments. However, nationalisms that are socially consequential for extended periods of time do involve activists. As Breuille explains, “the emergence of national sentiments has to be related to far more complex changes than the diffusion of a doctrine from its intellectual creators to broader populations” (“Approaches to Nationalism,” 147). However, “national sentiments . . . are so diffuse and varied that they normally are only selected for study by historians when they are mobilized by a political movement” (148)—for those are the cases in which such sentiments have sustained social effects.

One of the first concerns of an identity movement is practical alienation. Though they do not conceive of the issue in precisely these terms, all identity movements of any size—nationalist, religious, feminist, socialist, whatever—face the problem of splitting. At a certain point, an identity movement will spread beyond a very local, homogenous in-group—a group from the same region, speaking the same language, holding the same beliefs, and so forth. As the movement spreads, members with different languages, religious beliefs, ethnic backgrounds, and other potentially conflicting aspects of practical identity will enter the group. This broadening of membership almost invariably threatens to disrupt the sense of group identification through practical alienation (as well as through competing categorial identifications, which we will discuss below). Activists typically respond to this by a combination of homogenization and “tolerance” or accommodation to diversity. Thus, they first seek to create some sort of common group culture or, in our terms, shared practical identity. In the case of nationalism, this common culture usually involves a range of practices relating to language, religion, literature, music, art, food, dress, and so on. An illustrative instance, discussed by Santasombat, is the “national policy of homogenization” in Thailand (320), a policy “promoting religious and cultural unity among ethnically distinct subgroups” (321), with programs “designed to convert tribal peoples in north and northeastern Thailand to Buddhism” (320). Gans mentions several cases. “The United States and Australia,” he notes, “tried to force their respective aboriginal populations that had survived genocide to assimilate into the majority. Turkey has also recently attempted to do this to its Kurd population, as have post-colonial African states with respect to their populations” (13).¹³ Instances of the

key role in many cases.

13. Readers familiar with Gans's work will notice that I have not distinguished between “cultural nationalism, which focuses on the interests people have in their own culture,” and “statist nationalism,” which “focuses on the interests states have in the cultural homogeneity

“relentless press toward homogeneity” (in Verdery’s phrase [231]) could be extended almost indefinitely.

More exactly, many socially patterned constraints on and opportunities for individual choice arise spontaneously as part of the social evolution of practical identity. Put simply, societies develop in ways that enable us to do some things, but not others. For example, societies have a wide range of conventions that bear on social interaction, personal appearance, speech, and so forth. In these cases, the constraints and opportunities are usually both vague and implicit. Moreover, many of the constraints are flexible. Language provides a good example. In ordinary speech, we follow standard idioms, common word choice, ordinary syntactic principles. However, most people could not say what any of the usual constraints are. Moreover, there is considerable leeway regarding such constraints in actual practice—not only with respect to idioms and the like, but even with respect to more apparently strict principles. Thus, in conversation, we make grammatical mistakes all the time—not only mistakes from the perspective of prescriptive grammar, but mistakes from the perspective of our own, internal grammatical principles, thus our own linguistic practical identity. (The point is clear from any transcript of actual conversation; see, for example, the cases in Biber, Conrad, and Reppen 69–73 and 144.) Yet, for the most part, no one pays any attention.

In contrast, when homogenization derives from categorial identity, it is systematic and self-conscious. Moreover, it is often quite rigid and self-righteous, as well. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of religious homogenization, as when it is opposed to heresy. We also find it in

of their citizenries” (Gans 1). There are certainly contexts in which this distinction is significant. However, my contention here is that nationalism is always a matter of categorial identification. Certainly, people may join in solidarity for practical reasons. These reasons may include matters of practical identity. For example, speakers of a minority language may join together to agitate for schooling in that language, simply as a practical matter (e.g., if schooling in the majority language means that their children learn less or learn more slowly). However, the sorts of attachment and activism that characterize nationalism, including cultural nationalism, result only when the group stops being a temporary coalition to achieve particular pragmatic aims and becomes an identity group. Moreover, once this occurs, homogenization arises as an issue in cultural nationalism—just as it does in “statist nationalism.” Practical identities are not homogenous. For example, languages vary dialectally. Even if a group begins with some pragmatic commitment to practical identity, the shift to categorial identification brings with it concerns about homogenization, about not disrupting the sense of categorial identification through conflicts in practical identity. For example, speakers of a minority language may become concerned about forging a standard form of the language that overcomes regional variations. In this way, the issue of homogenization, as discussed here, is constant across both of Gans’s types, and for the same reason. As a result, the typological distinction, though undoubtedly consequential elsewhere, is not relevant here.

economic class—for example, when speech practices are homogenized as a sign of class standing in prescriptive grammar. In the case of nationalism, especially anticolonial nationalism, the most extreme forms of zealous strictness regarding homogenized practical identity occur in what I have elsewhere called “reactionary traditionalism” (see *Colonialism* 319). Reactionary traditionalism is (putatively) a rejection of the influence of other national cultures and a reaffirmation of one’s own national tradition. But, in fact, one’s own national tradition has always been an interacting complex of diverse and changing practical identities (as stressed, in different terms, by writers such as Nandy [*Illegitimacy* 47] and Parekh [19]). Unfortunately, this does the nationalist activist no good. In reactionary traditionalism, this vast array of practices is reduced to a limited set of norms, which activists affirm as the authentic culture of the nation. Indeed, in some cases, this set of norms does not even derive from those earlier practices, but is modeled on colonial stereotypes.

For example, Indian tradition includes a wide variety of beliefs, ranging from materialism and agnosticism to different forms of mysticism. In part because of colonial stereotypes, nationalist activists have tended to affirm a commitment to spirituality as Indian and materialism or agnosticism as European. Moreover, even within mysticism, reactionary traditionalists have been very selective—largely setting aside pacifistic tendencies (e.g., that of Patañjali’s *Yoga-Sūtra*) in favor of militaristic mysticism (prominently that of the *Bhagavad Gītā*; we will return to this point in chapter 6).

Of course, nationalist homogenization is not confined to reactionary traditionalism. It may take a number of forms, some of which are much less rigid than others. It may, for example, affirm syncretism. National identity in the United States does not involve an assertion of English or, still less, Native American tradition. Rather, it affirms some sort of synthesis derived from the “melting pot” of immigrant and, to a lesser extent, native cultures along with ideas, routines, and customs formed by American geography and particular historical experiences. Even more strikingly, some forms of nationalist homogenization may affirm tolerance or individual freedom. This, too, is part of the standard view of American identity. For example, imposing one’s religion on others is commonly seen as un-American.

The reverse of practical alienation is what I have elsewhere referred to as “situational identification” (see *Empire* 129–32). Again, practical alienation occurs when I expect a smooth interconnection of practical identities but instead encounter incompatibility. Situational identification occurs when I discover practical interconnections beyond what I expected. For

example, some of the Pranami Hindus mentioned by Nandy et al. may find that their views and actions do not fit well with those of other Hindus. As a result, they may experience practical alienation from those Hindus. Conversely, they may find that their views and actions do fit well with those of some Muslims. As a result, they may experience situational identification with those Muslims. Either occurrence is disruptive with respect to categorial identity. Practical alienation leads us to question our identification with members of the in-group defined by the relevant category. Situational identification leads us to question our difference from members of the out-group defined by that category. The result of this is that the development of categorial identity cannot homogenize in-group practical identity in just any way. To enhance in-group categorial identification, homogenization must reduce the overlap in practical identity across in- and out-groups. In other words, it is important that our interactions with other members of the in-group be distinctly more continuous than our interactions with members of the out-group.

Here, too, the obvious outcome is reactionary traditionalism. Reactionary traditionalists commonly seek to maximize the differences between in-group and out-group culture. In keeping with this, one major variant of reactionary traditionalism in anticolonial movements involves narrowing indigenous tradition by purging it of any properties or practices that overlap with those of the colonial culture. For example, if the colonizer is seen as sexually liberal, then sexually liberal strains of the indigenous tradition must be suppressed. Alternatively, reactionary anticolonialists may begin with stereotypes about indigenous culture that themselves assert a dichotomy between the indigenous culture and the colonial culture. For example, faced with a colonial stereotype that Africans are communal and interactive, nonrational, in touch with nature, and so forth, some African nationalists may assert that Africans are indeed communal and interactive (not individualistic, like Europeans), nonrational (unlike the logic-bound Europeans), and so forth.

Of course, in-group/out-group dichotomization too need not be a matter of reactionary traditionalism. Indeed, it may be just the opposite. Nationalists may try to base their sense of national difference on radical change and the loosening of constraints, on modernity and liberality. At least in some contexts, Americans see the United States as constantly overcoming the limits of the past and extending freedom—altering technologies, patterns of work, economic policies, social patterns, all in novel and liberating ways. In recent years, the affirmation of this view of American practical identity has been most prominent in contrast with reactionary traditionalist

movements in Islam. As such, it has partially underwritten American military actions in the Muslim world.

SELF-CONCEPTS AND GROUP IDEALS

Some of the preceding examples, however, suggest a problem. Up to now, I have been speaking of homogenization of the in-group and differentiation from the out-group as if an in-group's norms actually govern the homogenization of that group's practical identity. But this is clearly untrue. According to a study published in November 2004, the invasion of Iraq had at that point already resulted in over one hundred thousand excess deaths (see Roberts et al.). Despite governmental claims, it is difficult to reconcile this with America's self-defining ideals of benevolent liberality. The PATRIOT Act clearly involves an attempt to homogenize American practical identity. In doing this, it supposedly serves to preserve our freedoms. However, it does this primarily by taking away freedoms. The same point may be made, perhaps even more strongly, about the affirmation of indigenously nonrationality and other stereotypical assertions. After all, nationalist assertions of African irrationality do not serve to homogenize African practical identity by making Africans irrational. In order to take account of such discrepancies, we need to add a further component to our analysis of categorial identity.

As we have seen, the cultivation of categorial identification initially requires nothing more than a label along with some inclusion criterion to define just who belongs in the identity category (e.g., the nation). To stabilize this identification, its advocates—which may be a small elite or a large, popular body—tend to advocate and enforce the homogenization of in-group practices and their differentiation from out-group practices. Put differently, identity groups that move toward such differential homogenization (either spontaneously or by design) are more likely to thrive, while identity groups that sustain high levels of internal practical difference and external practical similarity are more likely to dissipate. But this is not everything that constitutes categorial identification. If they are sustained for any extended period of time, identity categories are likely to develop meaning structures that are consistent with general cognitive principles of semantics. Again, our minds organize and store meanings first and most significantly in prototypes. In keeping with this, our cognitive inclination is always to form prototypes when faced with a category. This is true whether the category is “bird” or “American.”

A prototype is, again, a standard or, roughly, average case. The prototypical human has two arms, two legs, is average height, and so on. However, a prototype is not an absolute average; it is, rather, a weighted average. The averaging process occurs unconsciously in our minds and it gives greater weight to distinctive features, those that highlight the differences between the present category and contrasting categories (cf. Tversky; Ortony; and Barsalou 212). In other words, in making prototypes, our minds follow principles parallel to those followed by reactionary traditionalists. For example, our prototypical man will be more masculine than the statistically average man. Thus, he will have a larger jaw and narrower hips. Similarly, the prototypical woman will be more feminine than the statistically average woman.

In keeping with this general feature of prototype formation, our prototypes for identity categories will be weighted and contrastive in precisely the same manner. Indeed, “man” and “woman” are already identity categories—fundamental identity categories, learned from infancy and enforced, often quite rigidly, through parenting, education, and so on. Note that the weighting operates for both the in-group and the out-group prototype. No matter whether one is a man or a woman, one’s prototypical man will be more manly than average and one’s prototypical woman will be more womanly than average. Whether one is white or black, one’s prototypical white person will be more “white” and one’s prototypical black person will be more “black” than is statistically accurate.

The preceding reference to statistical accuracy with respect to whites and blacks may have made some readers pause. Aren’t our prototypes of whites and blacks little more than stereotypes? Is there any point in speaking about statistical accuracy in such cases? This is, I believe, the right reaction. Of course, at one level, the differentiation in prototypical whites and blacks is entirely innocuous. Our prototypical white man is likely to be a bit blonder than average. Our prototypical black man is likely to have darker skin than the statistical average. But when our prototypes go beyond this simple weighting of skin and hair color, they become problematic. Indeed, a parallel point holds for men and women. Why then speak about averaging at all in these cases? Doesn’t “averaging” imply that our deviations are not mere ideology, that they refer, instead, to facts? But surely a racist stereotype of blacks has no basis in facts. Thus, it cannot be the result of averaging.

There are factors that enter into prototype formation beyond averaging, prominently including the biases in evaluation that accompany in-group/out-group categorization. Duckitt explains that “Ingroup members

are rated more favorably than outgroup members on evaluative trait ratings” (69). Indeed, in-group members judge the personalities and behavior of in-group members more favorably, even when the groups are formed arbitrarily and the members of a group are not allowed to interact (68–69). These evaluative discrepancies bias our interpretation of specific cases and thus alter the “data” that we average. As Nisbett and Ross note, a white person may see a white man lounging on a park bench in the afternoon and understand him as someone who has been laid off from work. In contrast, he or she may see a black person and understand him as a loafer. Thus, a white person may take identical instances of behavior in white and black individuals, but interpret them differently (Nisbett and Ross 240). Kunda cites a disturbing case of this sort. White test subjects were asked to watch a tape of two men arguing. When one of the men pushes the other, the experimenters stop the tape and ask test subjects to characterize the action. There were two versions of the tape. In one, a black man shoves a white man. In the other, a white man shoves a black man. As Kunda explains, “This made a big difference to how the shove was interpreted: When delivered by a White man, it was viewed most often as ‘playing around,’ or as ‘dramatizes,’ but when delivered by a Black man, the identical shove was typically viewed as a violent or aggressive behavior” (347). The interpretation is what contributes to the average. On the other hand, in cases such as these, the skewed interpretation results not only from in-group/out-group biases, but also from preexisting prototypes/stereotypes. Thus, the group biases cannot fully explain those prototypes/stereotypes.

The other crucial factor here, beyond basic in-group/out-group biases, is that weighted averaging is not confined to our direct experience of real people. Our minds spontaneously average over fictions, conjectures, gossip, and anything else that presents relevant information, whether that information is true or false. A European-American’s prototypical African American is formed in part from real experiences. But it is probably formed far more from television, film, literature, news, and private conversations (e.g., on the effects of informal, personal anecdotes; see van Dijk 157). To a great extent, our experience of out-groups is indirect, and filtered through other in-group members. Indeed, that separation of in-group from out-group members itself is important. Empirical research shows that one of the best ways to reduce affective bias against out-group members is through cooperative work toward shared goals (see Duckitt 98, 252, 256). In terms of the preceding analyses, this is unsurprising. Such cooperative work is just the sort of thing that is likely to lead to situational identification. Formal or informal segregation of groups prevents that.

So, once we begin to think in terms of certain identity categories, we are likely to form prototypes for those categories. The prototypes will highlight differences between in-group and out-group members. Moreover, those differences may be largely fictional, due to basic in-group/out-group biases and to the development of social ideologies that are then manifest in literature, film, history, and elsewhere. To make matters worse, these prototypes operate even if we do not believe in their validity. As Clore and Ortony point out, prototypes require “corrective processes” to be avoided (Clore and Ortony 35, citing Devine). In other words, even if we do not self-consciously accept the accuracy of a given prototype, it will affect our ideas, attitudes, interpretations, and actions unless we make an effort to correct for the effects of that prototype. At a neurobiological level, this is what the work of Krendl et al. indicates. When asked to evaluate members of stigmatized groups, test subjects evidently made an effort to overcome their prejudices. This was manifest in “robust activation of prefrontal regions.” These regions appear to inhibit “activation of the amygdala,” thus an aversive emotional attitude, when “perceivers are highly motivated to control their evaluative response” (12). Other research supports this analysis. For example, Ambady et al. used brain imaging and electric field recordings to study responses of low-prejudiced individuals and high-prejudiced individuals. They concluded that “low-prejudiced individuals . . . monitor automatic reactions to negative stereotypes elicited by out-group stimuli” (216–17).

However, even this does not always work. Monitoring and suppression are unreliable. Kunda summarizes research suggesting that, when we suppress one stereotype, we often do so in favor of another stereotype. Put differently, we may simply be choosing one in-group/out-group division over another. For example, a white man may respond to a Chinese woman through a Chinese stereotype, suppressing his stereotype of women, or vice versa (340). More significant, when a “stereotype is activated outside of our awareness, we may be able to do little to curtail” its effects (342). Perhaps most important, monitoring and suppression may backfire. Kunda discusses studies showing that the suppression of a stereotype in one context “led to an increase in its activation and use in other settings encountered shortly thereafter” (344). This, too, has significant behavioral consequences (345).

Again, we not only form prototypes of Others. We form prototypes of ourselves as well. The other side of in-group bias—beyond underestimating the personalities, behavior, accomplishments, and general value of out-group members—is overestimating the personalities, behavior,

accomplishments, and general value of in-group members. Moreover, this tendency is exacerbated by a fundamental principle of group dynamics. It is always a compliment to one's addressee to praise his or her identity groups. Indeed, though it is usually considered gauche to praise oneself, praise of one's group is considered generous, at least when one is addressing members of that group. Moreover, when one is speaking to members of out-groups, praise of one's own in-group may be considered bravely defiant, while denigration of one's own in-group is widely considered disloyal. Indeed, in any identity group, one of the greatest crimes one can commit is denigrating that group before the enemy. Humiliating the enemy is noble. Humiliating the in-group is a despicable form of betrayal—even if that humiliation is nothing more than an objective account of the actions of the in-group (e.g., its war crimes against another nation). As we discuss in chapter 2, this dichotomizing tendency reaches its pinnacle (or nadir) in the association of the in-group with divine choice and the linking of the enemy with Satanic or related evil (a cross-cultural tendency).

As these points suggest, there is an ethical component in the discourse surrounding the in-group and the out-group as well. Our lexical entry (i.e., our semantic memory) for a given term is likely to include, not only a prototype, but some set of norms forming an ideal, or paradigm, as well. This, too, is simply an ordinary part of semantic development. At least one property is found in the ideal for members of any in-group—loyalty. The ideal American, the ideal Catholic, the ideal feminist, the ideal socialist—insofar as these are understood as identity categories—is, above all else, loyal. Other aspects of the ideal may vary. Thus, the ideal American may cherish freedom. The ideal Muslim may cherish Islamic tradition. But the valuing of loyalty is constant.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, there are prototypes and ideals not only for members of the group, but for the group as a whole. In other words, there is an ideal to which I might aspire as an American. But there is also an ideal for America itself. In-groups have a universal group ideal, parallel to the universal individual ideal of loyalty. That ideal is authority or preference over out-groups.¹⁴ All identity groups share this. Indeed, it is implied by the presumption of in-group superiority. Insofar as my nation is best, it should have a position of authority over other nations. The same point holds for my religion or language. Indeed, the personal ideal of loyalty is inseparable from the collective ideal of dominance. Again, even in

14. Of course, this may take different forms. In one case, it may be a matter of direct rule over other nations. In another case, it may be a matter of widely recognized superiority or leadership in some area of politics or culture.

minimal (or contentless) groups, individuals are willing to forgo personal gain so that their in-group will be hierarchized above the out-group (see Duckitt 68–69). Beyond this, ideals for the group may vary.

As should be obvious, in the real world, problems are almost certain to arise in the pursuit of these ideals. It is often impossible to reconcile the pursuit of dominance with the other ideals commonly professed for a nation and for its citizens. Take a society that considers itself Christian—such as the United States, especially in the presidency of George W. Bush. How can a society pursue global authority through military domination and at the same time claim to be following the teachings of Jesus, who famously proclaimed, “To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too” (Luke 6:29 *Jerusalem Bible*)? How do the invasions of Afghanistan or Iraq conform to the teachings of Jesus? The problem is not confined to Christian societies. Every in-group compromises its more peripheral moral principles in pursuit of its basic norm—dominance over out-groups. But how does an in-group understand or imagine what occurs during this compromise? For example, how do the evangelical supporters of President Bush understand themselves as part of a Christian nation and supporters of military invasions?

To answer these questions, we need to isolate a further component of the in-group category. It is, in effect, the opposite of the ideal. It is the set of characteristic sins or faults, both those of members of the group and those of the group as a whole. For instance, Greenwald et al. explain that men identify even with the negative aspects of being “strong” (325). This negative self-image may serve a number of functions. For one thing, it may contribute to in-group/out-group dichotomization. Men’s identification with destructiveness is bound up with an identity-based opposition to women’s putative gentleness. Most important for our present concerns, this component commonly serves to rationalize actions that would otherwise threaten one’s self-evaluation as a member of a group and one’s evaluation of the group. The negative self-prototype allows members of the in-group to understand their own individual and collective failures as the result of particular, acceptable, perhaps even unavoidable flaws. Thus, the United States may have the fault of blundering in, lacking cultural sensitivity, failing to fully plan its benevolent invasions. It may have the same fault in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Iraq, never really learning its lesson. This is unfortunate. It may even be tragic. But it is not a violation of such ideal principles as supporting freedom and democracy. It may even be the inescapable consequence of our innocence, optimism, and enthusiastic good will. In any case, admitting these faults into the prototype of “America” allows us

to avoid recognizing that the United States has repeatedly invaded other countries for purposes that have little to do with freedom and democracy and that often result in the denial of both.

Before concluding this section, it is important to mention a final norm that arises in connection with social prototypes. This is the norm that adjures members of the in-group to conform, in general, not only to paradigms or ideals, but to the group prototype as well, including, for example, preferences in food or entertainment—and even including the group’s putatively characteristic faults.¹⁵ Conformity, here, means fitting one’s behavior to group expectations, not necessarily to group behavior *per se*.¹⁶ This norm is commonly invoked under the rubric of authenticity. Someone who deviates from the prototype too greatly is not a “real” or “authentic” group member. For example, someone who supports socialism or is a practicing Muslim may not be viewed as a “real” American, even when his or her politics or religion does not impinge on practical social interactions or national loyalty.

IDENTITY AND SOCIAL HIERARCHY

In the preceding sections, I have spoken somewhat vaguely about nationalists, activists for an in-group, advocates of a particular categorial identification, and so forth. The point of these references is that there are always some people who are more diligent than others in the propagation of identity categories. This propagation may be self-consciously planned or it may occur spontaneously. In some cases, it is the result of “lateral” connections, interactions among people at roughly the same level of authority or social power. In other cases, it involves economic, political, institutional, or other hierarchies. Indeed, both sorts of connections—vertical and lateral—appear to be necessary for the successful propagation of an identity category. Moreover, both are bound up with the homogenization of practical identities. In the preceding section, I treated homogenization in largely egalitarian terms. But it invariably involves a hierarchical component as well. While some aspects of practical identity may be simply egalitarian,

15. There are, of course, exceptions to this. For example, nationalist activists might object to prototypical behavior of the in-group if it is inadequately nationalistic. However, the imperative to conform to prototypical behaviors holds generally. Indeed, when nationalists try to change prototypical behavior, their aim is to establish a new, normatively valid prototype for conformity.

16. For example, in order to be considered an authentic black man, a rap musician might conform to a prototype that has little to do with the actual behavior of ordinary black men.

many involve structures of authority as a necessary element. For example, in religious rituals, the priest or minister has a role different from members of the congregation. That is because the priest or minister has greater authority within the ritual, greater power over the execution of the ritual, and so on.

The final point suggests that the homogenization of practical identity is not a matter of giving everyone the same practical identity. Of course, there is enormous overlap. However, there are crucial points at which practical identities differ. For example, entirely uniform practical identities could operate only in relatively uniform situations that allow for predictable outcomes. If all roads have two lanes and allow for traffic in both directions, then our uniform practical identity (in the United States, “drive on the right”) will serve us all pretty well. However, in any situation that is not precisely normal, any situation in which outcomes may differ in consequential ways, some hierarchy is required—or at least useful—for coordinating behavior. If a road narrows to one lane (e.g., due to an accident), then it is usually helpful to set up some sort of hierarchy of authority. Through this hierarchy—for example, through a police officer halting some cars while allowing others to proceed—the flow of traffic may be regulated successfully. Note that this is not something that contradicts practical identity. It is a crucial element of practical identity. Part of our practical identity is knowing what to do in such a situation. In other words, it involves knowing our place in the relevant hierarchy and the places of other people in that hierarchy. Indeed, hierarchy pervades practical identity. A great deal of childrearing involves inculcating the ways one should respond to different groups of people—parents, teachers, priests and ministers, police officers, and so on. A central component in each case is a familiarity with what one can and cannot do to or with members of these groups, what freedom one has with them and what freedom they have in return. In each case, practical identity is bound up with the apportioning and gradation of authority.

At the same time, that apportioning and gradation of authority are themselves inseparable from labeling, from defining some people as parents and others as children, some as teachers and others as students.¹⁷ As a result, practical identity in these cases is inseparable from categorial identity. Most often, one has certain privileges or obligations with respect to someone else, not because of one’s practical identity per se, but because of the categories at play in the relationship. I obey the orders of a police

17. In connection with this, it is worth noting that the establishment of inegalitarian social equilibrium has been modeled in terms of asymmetrical roles in game theory (see, for example, McAdams and citations).

officer precisely because I categorize him or her as a police officer and I categorize myself as a civilian. I would not (in most cases) obey that same person, making the same gestures and saying the same things, if I categorized him or her—or myself—differently. Indeed, social categories are generally hierarchized and that hierarchization is crucial to the way they figure in practical identity. More technically, the procedures that define our practical identity are not triggered by immediate experiences, but by a particular “encoding” of those experiences. Encoding is the selection and organization of information available in the environment. Hierarchized social categories contribute crucially to the way we encode information. Put simply, when we approach a part of the road where one lane is closed, we do not need to encode details about the foliage on the side of the road, the color of the various vehicles around us, the height of the person directing traffic. However, we do need to encode those details that trigger the category “police officer” (e.g., the color and design of his or her clothing).

Of course, we do not simply obey others because we are told that they have authority. We obey them because their category is associated with the possibility of coercion. That possibility may be many steps removed. But it is nonetheless real. I obey the police officer since he or she might arrest me. I obey a teacher because he or she might give me a bad grade—which could result in my not getting a suitable job, thus harming my ability to achieve other goals in life. In this way, authority is *functional*. Hierarchized categories, insofar as they organize and orient our practical identities, are underwritten by the possibility of practical harm—or, in some cases, practical benefit.

Hierarchization of this sort also enters into the definition of identity prototypes and norms. First, in most cases, our prototype for a group member will be more obedient to group hierarchy than the statistically average member of the group (e.g., our prototypical Catholic is probably more committed to papal authority than the average Catholic). More important, in most cases, our norms for group behavior highly value obedience within the group.

There are certain limitations on this valorization of authority and obedience—or, rather, qualifications of it. For example, some rejection of authority is a crucial part of American national norms, visible in television programs, movies, and the widespread indifference to torture. On the one hand, the United States is, like other groups, highly devoted to group hierarchy. For example, there is a great deal of reverence for the president, primarily because he is the president. Many Americans take offense at

criticisms of our commander-in-chief. On the other hand, rugged independence and rejection of authority are a crucial part of American norms as well. In the final analysis, though, this presumptively distinctive American characteristic is less exceptional than it may at first seem. Indeed, it has three characteristics that recur in other nations as well, if in different degrees.

First, the American rejection of authority is often a rejection of foreign authority. Historically, the paradigm case of such independence is the rejection of the English monarchy. However, the practice of repudiating foreign authority continues into the present. Consider the recent condemnation of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a condemnation that spanned virtually the entire globe. Americans not only rejected world opinion, many seemed quite proud of our nonconformity. A similar point holds for the use of torture in American prisons in Iraq. Americans can be positively pleased that their government is refusing to follow international rules. As the case of France and Iraq suggests, this is not because Americans individually agree with American policies. They may or may not agree. It is, rather, because such defiance is an affirmation of national autonomy.

But Americans do not reject only the authority of out-groups. They also reject the authority of some members of the in-group. This is because those authorities are (putatively) inhibiting the advancement of the goals of the group. This leads to the second component of the American rejection of hierarchy. Groups commonly justify internal hierarchy by reference to the well-being of the group. Thus, it is always possible to reject that hierarchy in cases where group well-being is at stake. This is actually one of the most common, recurring motifs in American national narratives. It is a crucial part of the American national ideal. Indeed, it is perhaps the primary way in which we can think of ourselves as individualistic while simultaneously being almost fanatical about national identity and patriotic loyalty.

Finally, it is important to recognize that American antiauthoritarianism is virtually never very extended in its scope. In other words, it is virtually never revolutionary. The normative rejection of authority in American nationalism tends to be local and subhierarchical or impersonal. In other words, it tends to be the rejection of some lower-level official who is ignorant or corrupt or the rejection of some impersonal agency that has no understanding of the actual of struggles of real people (i.e., is ignorant or corrupt). The former may be referred to as the “bad boss” scenario; the latter is the “bad bureaucracy” scenario. (Readers should be able to recall numerous examples from film and television. In chapter 5, we consider a prominent American film that illustrates these tendencies.)

The rejection of the bad boss or the bad bureaucracy is, of course, a matter of rejecting authority that does not serve the interests of the group. One result of this is that the local rejection of authority tends to focus on positions that are justified specifically by merit. If someone's position of authority is justified by merit, our rejection of that authority is normative when the person does not in fact have the merit. The supervising officer has his or her position because he or she supposedly understands policing better than the rookie. If that is untrue, his position is undeserved. The crucial point here is that not all positions of authority in a group are justified by merit. Those that are justified in other ways are, then, the ones that demand our most strict allegiance. The obvious case is the presidency. Put differently, some positions of authority are the manifestation, not of merit, but of national autonomy. Those require our more or less unquestioned obedience.

These forms of opposition to authority probably have unusual salience in American nationalist discourse. Moreover, in their current American versions, they are the product of particular historical and cultural developments. However, they are far from uniquely American. Indeed, they are almost certainly found, in some form, in all varieties of nationalism. Indeed, societies not only need ways of establishing and sustaining hierarchies of authority. They need ways of altering such hierarchies in the face of contradictory group interests as well.

NATIONALIST RESPONSES TO CONFLICTS AMONG IDENTITY CATEGORIES

I have been speaking, to this point, about in-group identification generally. I have considered the establishment of such identification through vacuous categories with inclusion criteria, its relation to practical identity and the homogenization of culture, the development of group norms and prototypes, and the establishment of external group oppositions and internal group hierarchies. I have drawn examples from a range of groups, discussing religious, ethnic, linguistic, national, and other categories without distinction. But these different types of group are distinct. And that distinctness has consequences.

Commonly, each of us has only one religion, one nationality, one racial category. Multiplicity may arise within a type of identity category (e.g., in cases of dual citizenship). However, that multiplicity is accidental. In contrast, multiplicity necessarily arises across types of identity category. My

national identity category simply is not the same as my religious, racial, or even ethnic identity category. As Sen points out, “There are a great variety of categories to which we simultaneously belong.” In some cases “they compete for attention and priority over each other” (19). Indeed, their conflict may give rise to serious practical difficulties for national integration and homogenization. Specifically, our multiple identity categories may generate multiple and contradictory loyalties in cases of social conflict. For example, when the United States attacks a Muslim country, a Muslim American may feel greater categorial identification with his or her fellow Muslims or with his or her fellow Americans. Moreover, different categorial identities tend to be associated with different practical identities in certain areas. Thus, Christian Americans and Muslim Americans may find that they cannot always interact in completely fluid ways. Practical discontinuities may make their different religious identities more obvious or more consequential than their shared national identity. In short, discrepancies across non-national categorial identities may disrupt national homogenization and undermine national identification.

Nationalists facing this dilemma have tended to take one of two approaches. One way of preventing these discontinuities is through alignment, the paralleling of national, ethnic, religious, and other categories. Nationalists who adopt this approach aim for a nation with a common ethnicity, religion, language, and so forth. Since nationalists usually cannot align all categories, they will most often emphasize a few. Depending on the precise categories they stress, there are two ways in which they may go about this. They may try to convert everyone to a single religion, to make one language standard for the entire nation, and so on. In other words, they may try to change the categories of some members of the current population. Obviously, this will work only with “elective” identity categories, categories such as religion that one can in principle choose to change. It will not work with nonelective categories, such as ethnicity or race. Thus, nationalists who stress alignment with nonelective categories tend to advocate separatism (if the desired alignment occurs in geographically localized areas of the current nation); restrictions on immigration (if national alignment is largely intact, but at risk from immigration); and/or “ethnic cleansing,” the physical removal of people belonging to the “wrong” (nonelective) groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, either through deportation or murder.

The elective alignment strategy has been fairly common. Indeed, Philip generalizes the idea, asserting that, “It is accepted wisdom that nationalism needs to be buttressed by certain key factors which distinguish one

nation from another. Among these factors are counted a common territory, a common language, a common culture, a common history, and a common religion” (5). The nonelective alignment strategy, too, has been common. Nazism is an obvious case. It, and related forms of fascism, may seem to be the only instances of this sort. However, in somewhat milder versions, nonelective alignment nationalism has arisen much more frequently than one might imagine. Arendt points out that “there was hardly a country left on the Continent that did not pass between the two wars some new legislation which, even if it did not use this right extensively, was phrased to allow for getting rid of a great number of its inhabitants at any opportune moment” (278–79). She goes on to explain that “in the years following Hitler’s successful persecution of German Jews,” a broad range of “countries began to think in terms of expatriating their minorities” (289). Nor is this solely European. Befu explains that advocates of *Nihonjinron* [Japanese identity] assert the “isomorphism of geography, race, language, and culture.” They insist that “carriers of Japanese culture” are necessarily “speakers of the Japanese language” and that they “share ‘blood’” and have done so for thousands of years. Moreover, “no significant amount of new blood has been infused into this ‘pure’ Japanese race” (276). Wimmer notes that forms of ethnic cleansing have been “constants of the European history of nation-building and state formation, from the expulsion of Gypsies under Henry VIII or of Muslims and Jews under Fernando and Isabella to . . . the ‘people’s exchange,’ as it was euphemistically called, after the Treaty of Lausanne between Turkey and Greece” (3). Horowitz refers to numerous cases of this sort—the expulsion of “Indian Tamils” from Sri Lanka, Chinese from Vietnam, Bengalis from Burma, and Asians from Uganda, the attempts to deprive Chinese and Indians of Malaysian citizenship, Ivory Coast riots against Dahomeyans and Togolese (with “some victims . . . offered the ‘choice’ between departing the country and death” [198]), and so forth (198–99).

A second broad approach to nationalism accepts the diversity of identity categories in the nation, but tries to manage that diversity. It does this, in part, by undertaking to minimize their disruption of practical identity. One standard way of minimizing practical disruption is through the homogenization of public interaction and the localization (or even privatization) of nonhomogenous practices. In such a system, nonhomogenous practices associated with, say, diverse religions would not commonly confront one another in public spaces. For example, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu politicians may refer to “God” in public speeches, but confine more sectarian ideas or references to their homes and places of

worship. This is not to say that there would never be occasions when non-national identities would arise publicly. The point is simply to minimize and disperse occasions for practical alienation. A nation can sustain a certain amount of internal identity conflict. It is crucial, however, that the conflict not be frequent enough and public enough to inspire large subgroups to reject national identity in favor of some other identity—religious, ethnic, regional, or whatever.

A further, in some ways even more important, method of managing identity diversity is by hierarchizing identity categories. As a number of writers have noted (see, for example, Berezin 83), our self-concept is structured. I think of myself as more centrally a professor than a resident of Connecticut; I think of myself as more centrally a resident of Connecticut than someone who owns a beige desk. In terms of identity categories, I am more likely to be motivated by a sense of identification with professors than by a sense of identification with residents of Connecticut. A hierarchy of this sort is always in place. Managing identity diversity in relation to national identity involves the establishment of national identification above all potentially competing categorial identifications.

I saw a striking example of this recently with my own family. Most members of my family are very devout Catholics. Moreover, several of them have a devotion to the Pope that goes well beyond anything required by Catholic teaching—in one case, treating pictures of the Pope as if they were holy relics. Yet no one in my family was affected in the least by Pope John Paul II's opposition to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. (On the Pope's antiwar views, see Scheer, "The Pope," and Carroll.) Their devotion to the Pope was seemingly boundless when there was no conflict between their Catholic identity and their American identity. But, as soon as the two did conflict, their devotion to the Pope virtually evaporated. It seems clear that they have set "American" above "Catholic" in the motivational hierarchy of their identity categories.

Although hierarchization predominates in the second sort of nationalism (i.e., the sort that manages diversity), it is not at all absent from the first sort, the sort that tries to do away with diversity. Even the most extreme variety of alignment nationalism cannot eliminate all subnational categories. If Catholics are gone, different Protestant groups may conflict with one another. If only Baptists remain, different orientations among Baptists will be possible sources of identity conflict. Moreover, there are always regional and other differences. Each of these categories must be subordinated to the national category. In short, category hierarchization is crucial to all forms of nationalism.

This leads us to the issue of just how category hierarchies develop. Referring to a particular case, Monroe, Hankin, and van Vechten put the issue clearly, asking, “What is it that made ‘Serbianness’ politically salient at a particular time and place, such that this Serb identity came to be understood as a basis for genocidal behavior? Each Serb also had other identities that had the potential to be critical bases for differentiation: class, race, rural/urban, and even Yugoslavian” (439; unfortunately, the question is rather biased, as the work of Herman and Peterson shows, but it illustrates the point nonetheless). The problem is generalizable.

FIVE PARAMETERS IN THE HIERARCHIZATION OF IDENTITY CATEGORIES

Identity hierarchies are by no means unique. Indeed, they are, at one level, merely instances of ordinary categorization processes that occur constantly in our day-to-day activities. Every thing, event, or condition may be named and described in many ways. We choose some names and descriptions over others. Moreover, we understand and respond to things, events, and conditions in terms of some categories rather than others. Hierarchizing categorial identities is, first of all, a matter of doing the same thing with persons, including ourselves.

How, then, do we categorize ordinary objects? (Here and below, I will use “object” in a very broad sense where it includes any target of categorization—thus things, events, and so forth.) The simplest reason that I use one word rather than another, isolate one aspect or element of an object rather than another, is that it occurs to me. Technically, some conceptual categories and some objective properties are more salient than others. Suppose I look into a room. The room has some furniture, a few gum wrappers on the floor, a movie poster, and a corpse. If someone asks me what is in the room, I am likely to ignore the furniture, gum wrappers, and movie poster, mentioning only the dead body. This is because the corpse has a high degree of *salience*. Salience has two aspects. First, it involves the intrinsic properties of the object. Intrinsic salience is a matter of the degree to which the item itself is attention-drawing. For example, things that are smelly or loud tend to be highly salient. Second, salience involves relational characteristics. These are a matter of subjective propensities that link one to the object in attention-eliciting ways.¹⁸ For example, one’s name is always salient.

18. Technically, all salience is relational in that properties can trigger attention only

Suppose I am having a conversation at a party. Someone behind me, in another conversation, is saying all sorts of things that I do not hear. His words have no salience—in themselves or for me. If he suddenly shouts, I will hear that because the loudness makes it intrinsically salient. Similarly, if he says “Hogan,” I will hear that because it has relational salience for me (see LeDoux, *Synaptic* 191). In this case, relational salience results from long-term sensitivities. Relational salience may also be a matter of priming, which is to say, the partial activation of cognitive contents, a partial activation that temporarily renders me more sensitive to the presence of particular objects or the occurrence of particular events. For example, if I am in a conversation about hair loss, then, for a while after that conversation, I will find men’s hairlines particularly salient. When I am in the dentist’s office, everyone’s teeth become salient.

Salience operates in the same way with identity categories. At the level of individual group members, some categories are more intrinsically salient than others. For example, in most cases, race has significantly greater visual salience than nationality. We may become aware of someone’s race by looking at him or her. Indeed, the neurobiological research considered earlier shows the great importance of perceptual salience for triggering in-group/out-group divisions. Such perceptual triggering is much less likely to happen with nationality. As nationality generally lacks intrinsic salience, nationalists must work particularly hard at making national identity relationally salient. Indeed, the promotion of salience is one of the tasks undertaken by activists and one of the reasons activists are so important for the development of nationalism.

Of course, there may be many salient properties of any given object. But we do not value all such properties equally. What other criteria, then, affect our categorizations of ordinary objects? More precisely, what properties are we likely to exclude, even when they are salient? In choosing one name or description out of many possibilities, we are, first of all, disposed to ignore ephemera. If a property is likely to change quickly, we are unlikely to use that property for purposes of categorization. The point is well established in, for example, studies of childhood development. As Pascal Boyer points out, children “start with some definite biases about what aspects of the environment they should attend to, and what they should infer from these cues” (107). Specifically, they categorize objects

because of their relation to the human senses and cognition. The difference is that intrinsic salience requires only the ordinary functioning of our common sensory and cognitive systems (e.g., hearing). Relational salience, in contrast, relies on variable contents of cognition (e.g., specific memories).

by drawing on tacit expectations about the constancy of “essential” properties (108). Obviously, this is a default tendency that may be overridden in particular cases. However, it is a very robust and resilient tendency. This leads us to our second parameter, *durability*. Other things being equal, we prefer categories that refer to more durable properties. In connection with categorial identity, we need to distinguish two levels of durability. On the one hand, there is the degree to which an individual’s category status may change. On the other hand, there is the degree to which the social group isolated by the category is itself enduring. If the group itself has developed only recently, then its own stability may be uncertain. In the case of identity categories, then, high durability means that I am unlikely to leave the group and the group itself is unlikely to dissolve.¹⁹ With respect to both levels, nonelective identity categories, such as race, tend to have an advantage over elective categories, such as religion, nation, or class.²⁰

But durability too is insufficient. Consider a very simple case. I am presented with a \$100 bill in a plastic bag. Paper is not very durable. Plastic bags (I gather) are. However, I am very unlikely to categorize this gift as “plastic.” I am likely to say, “Wow! One hundred dollars!” The reason for this is straightforward: We also choose characterizations based on importance, usefulness, value. Note that this is not confined to positive value. A large credit card bill in a plastic bag would have the same consequences. In the case of identity categories, it is not quite accurate to speak of value. Rather, we would say that categories have greater or lesser *functionality*. Functionality is the degree to which a particular category affects one’s freedom of action or choice and one’s receipt of goods and services in a given society.²¹ The more functional a category, the more likely it is to be high in the hierarchy of one’s self-concept. The operation of legal systems, which govern the use of violence and the flow of goods and services, more or less

19. The sense of group durability is bound up with the importance of significant historical events, often involving relations between the in-group and some out-group. These events give us a sense of the group’s past, and thus a sense of its enduring nature. Such “historical memories” have been stressed by a number of writers on nationalism (see, for example, Wimmer 105), though in a noncognitive context.

20. Horowitz suggests a similar point when he refers to “the more immutable and therefore reliable” cues to group identity (47); he also touches on saliency when he refers to cues that are “more visible”. Needless to say, in contrast with Horowitz, my claim here has nothing to do with “reliability.” Durability gives properties a greater effect on our categorization processes. It does not give the corresponding categories any greater validity.

21. Note that I am referring to the social function of categories here. I am not referring to the “psychological function” of identity. Thus, I am not presenting what is sometimes called a “functionalist” account of nationalism, according to which nationalism satisfies a psychological need (see Breuilly, “Approaches to Nationalism” 154–57).

guarantees that nationality is a highly functional category.²² This is less commonly the case for, say, religious categories. For this reason, activists for religious identity have to exert a special effort to make religious identity appear functional. The obvious way of doing this is through appeals to suffering or reward in an afterlife. This has at times been supplemented by the more material functionality of heresy inquisitions or communal conflict (as in India or Northern Ireland today). Despite the abolition of race-based slavery, race continues to be a highly functional category in the United States and elsewhere. However, there is no intrinsic reason for this. Unlike nationality, there is nothing in the nature of racial categories that makes them particularly likely candidates for an enhanced social function. An important and complex case of functionality may be found in sex. Sex is always functional in society because of its place in reproduction. Indeed, sex categories are always functional in such a way as to bear directly on nations, religions, ethnicities, and so forth, for the reproduction of these groups is in part contingent on the biological reproduction of their members. In this way, sex is an identity category that all identity groups must address and incorporate, because of its functional consequences.²³

Of course, a very common property may be highly functional, durable, and salient. But it is unlikely to trigger categorization. When we are treating identity, one of our main concerns is distinctiveness. Except in very

22. In different theoretical contexts, other writers have implicitly recognized the importance of social function. For example, Wimmer's account of ethnic conflict takes up function in this sense. In speaking of the ethnicization of national bureaucracy, he explains that "it is not the unequal representation of different ethnic groups in the state apparatus as such that leads to a politicisation of ethnic differences. Only when those in power favour their own ethnic groups to the cost of others is a fertile ground for the politicisation of ethnicity prepared" (92). However, in most cases, writers treating function have set out to isolate what the different parties in, say, ethnic conflict have to gain through that conflict. My analysis says nothing about gain from conflict. It says only that functionality increases the likelihood that one identity category will be hierarchized above others. For example, war—such as the current war in Iraq—contributes to the functionality of national identity categories. It thereby increases the likelihood that Jones, a U.S. citizen, will categorize himself preeminently as an American. This does not mean that Jones himself, or Americans generally, have anything to gain from this war. Horowitz notes that the main theories of ethnic conflict stress such factors as "economic interest" (140). He also explains that these theories have limited success in explaining actual ethnic conflict. One reason for this is that the theories are taking up functionality in an overly limited way. Issues of, say, resource control are certainly important in governmental deliberations on war. However, at the level of individual citizens' commitment to war or other forms of identity-based conflict, identity categorization is the crucial factor. That categorization is often functional, due to the broad organization of society or common social practices. But it need not involve any systematic possibilities for material gain or loss in the particular case at hand.

23. For a discussion of gender and nationalism, in a very different theoretical context, see Walby.

unusual contexts, we are unlikely to characterize a person as having eyes. Eyes are certainly functional; they are durable; they are salient. The difficulty is that most people have eyes. Moreover, most nonhuman animals have eyes. Thus, having eyes is not a good differentiating feature, not a feature that is appropriate for defining identity. Moreover, not any difference will serve well for categorization. The sharper and more discrete the distinction, the better. If a particular feature varies in slight increments from one person to another, then it is a less likely choice for categorization than if a feature varies in large steps. The limiting case of this is bipolar division. Thus, a sharp, bipolar division is more likely to be high in our hierarchy of categories than is a more smoothly graduated set of differences. I refer to this as *opposability*. One type of identity category scores very high in opposability—sex. Though hermaphrodites do present an intermediate case, the great majority of people are male or female. Sexual orientation comes close. Even including a large number of bisexuals, the division is relatively sharp and involves only three categories. Depending on just how it is interpreted, a category such as class may rank very low on opposability. If it is interpreted in terms of income, as is common in the United States, then there is clearly a relatively smooth gradient of class categories or possible categories. Indeed, virtually every household has a different income. Categories such as nation are intermediate. There are sharp divisions, due to legal requirements for citizenship and the relative rarity of dual citizenship. However, there are many nations, so the division is not close to bipolar.

Here, an interesting complication enters. Even in ordinary categorization, we try to quantify gradients. Thus, we speak of “tall,” “average,” and “short” people, though people come in a variety of heights. We find the same thing in identity categories. The world does not divide into a black race and a white race. However, in the United States, we tend to treat these categories as if they were sharply different. Moreover, in cases where there is quantization, the tendency is strong to reduce the alternatives to two or three. As Horowitz remarks, “despite the plurality of groups in an environment (rarely are there only two), polarity frequently emerges” (182). In the case of American racial categorization, we see this in the white/nonwhite division. In religion, we see this in the Protestant/Catholic opposition in Northern Ireland, the Christian/Jewish division in much of Europe at different times, and the Hindu/Muslim divide in India. We also see this in the nationalist tendency to isolate one or two national enemies against which the national in-group may be defined. Indeed, this is part of the propaganda function of cultivating a collective imagination of a great enemy—the

Soviet Union during the Cold War or international terrorism (or fundamentalist Islam) in the war on terror, to take two American examples.

In sum, when there is some potential conflict among our identity categories, we are more likely to think of ourselves in terms of the category that is most salient, enduring, functional, and opposable. If nationalists are to succeed in lifting the national category above racial, religious, ethnic, or other categories, they must engage in the sorts of actions that enhance salience, perceived durability, perceived functionality, and opposability. (I say “perceived durability” and “perceived functionality” because in each case it is not the objective, worldly fact, but our experience and understanding of the world that are crucial. “Salience” and “opposability” already refer to our experience and understanding. Thus, the qualification is not necessary in those cases.)

On the other hand, none of this matters if we are not moved to act on this categorization. At the beginning of this section, I wrote that identity hierarchies are, *at one level*, instances of ordinary categorization processes. But that level is inadequate to create nationalism, or any other operative group identification. The hierarchy of categorial identities is not simply a matter of thinking about ourselves and others in a particular way. It is a matter of acting on that categorization. It is not, then, simply a matter of ideas. It is also a matter of motives. These motives derive their force from our emotional engagements²⁴ or the category’s *affectivity*, our final parameter.

In order for nationalism to have concrete, practical effects, citizens must feel something about that national category. Our emotional response is in part a simple result of labeling, as we have already seen. It is a matter of categorial identification triggering responses in the amygdala or insula in the case of out-groups, and perhaps regions such as the basal ganglia (which are connected with trust; see King-Casas et al.), in the case of in-groups. In addition, labels become associated with particular emotional experiences (e.g., in war). These emotional experiences serve to specify and intensify the motivational force of the categories. Moreover, beyond the categories themselves, we have emotional responses to the routines of homogenized practical identities, to in-group and out-group prototypes, to the land, and to other components of national identification. These responses, too, are

24. Horowitz makes a similar point in the (different, but related) context of ethnic conflicts, when he writes that such conflicts require “an explanation that takes account of the emotional concomitants of group traits and interactions” (181–82).

in part a result of mere categorization and in part the product of particular emotional experiences. In both cases, the relevant experiences may derive from our engagement with the world itself or from our engagements with representations of the world in literature, media, ordinary discourse, and so forth.²⁵

25. The preceding analysis should indicate the ways in which my cognitive account of national identification differs from the accounts of other writers. Consider, for example, Wimmer's four "models of explanation and interpretation" for ethnicity and nationalism (see 51–52). The first is a matter of "rational choice." Rational self-interest—including group self-interest—certainly enters into the calculation of individuals (including government officials) engaging in action bearing on the nation. However, our individual and collective behaviors are motivated in much more complex ways. Again, research shows that, given a choice, people opt for hierarchizing the in-group above the out-group rather than maximizing their own or their in-group's gain (see Duckitt 68–69). In keeping with this, as I have stressed, functionality enters nationalism, not in terms of possible individual or even group benefit in particular cases, but in terms of likely self-categorization across cases. Thus, rational self-interest is largely irrelevant to my account. It enters only when distinctive concerns of categorial identification are absent—thus, when we are not really talking about nationalism at all. Two of Wimmer's other three models make "ethnic and nationalist politics" part of "modern society" (51). As I noted in the introduction, one can certainly define nationalism in such a way that it applies only to categorial identifications found in the modern period. Moreover, the historical differences in categorial identifications are very important. However, modern nationalism does not arise out of nothing. It arises from the same neurocognitive structures and processes, as well as the same general principles of group dynamics, as all earlier human group identifications. Historicist accounts almost necessarily leave out all this. The final model isolated by Wimmer treats ethnicity as "a constant factor of human life" such that "Politics has always been a matter of ethnic pride and rivalry" (51). In my account, categorial identification has been a continuous and central factor of human life and politics has always involved categorial identification. However, no one type of identity category (e.g., ethnicity) has necessarily been dominant. Different categories and types of categories have formed shifting, variable configurations even among the same people over short periods of time. Finally, as we will see more clearly in the following chapters, the emotions that bear on categorial identification are not reducible to pride and rivalry.

Similar points apply to David Brown's "three conceptual languages which see nationalism as, respectively, an instinct (primordialism), an interest (situationalism) and an ideology (constructivism)" (5). Brown's "primordialism" is roughly the same as Wimmer's ethnicity-based model. Again, I agree that categorial identification is a cross-cultural and transhistorical propensity of humans. But that says nothing about the precise nature of the identification. Moreover, it is very far from suggesting that ethnic identifications are somehow representative of genuinely natural groupings—quite the contrary, in fact. His situationalist category is more or less identical with Wimmer's rational choice model. Brown's third category, which sees nationalism as ideological, is perhaps closest to my own view, depending on how one defines ideology. *Ideology* may be understood as having two characteristics. First, it is a complex of false ideas or overly limited alternatives for understanding the world along with a set of aspirations that are not in the best interest of the people who have adopted those aspirations. Second, ideology is socially functional in establishing or preserving nonmeritocratic social hierarchies. I would certainly say that nationalism commonly has both characteristics. However, this is quite general and does not in any way explain nationalism—its components, causes, varieties, etc. Moreover, this does not seem to fit Brown's account of nationalism as

Again, we all fall into countless categories. In this way, each of us has countless identities. But these do not have equal importance in our self-concepts and they do not have equal motivational force. I have isolated five parameters governing the hierarchization of identity categories—salience, durability, functionality, opposability, and affectivity. We must now consider how nationalist practices serve to manipulate these parameters toward nationalist ends, and how processes of nationalization are so successful in elevating the national identity category that people—many people—are willing to sacrifice their own lives (and, of course, the lives of others) for what they see as service to the nation.

“simplistic formulas” presented by nationalist leaders to “otherwise confused or insecure individuals” (20). This is not entirely out of keeping with my account of the conditions for the rise of sacrificial nationalism. Moreover, it fits many cases of heroic nationalism (e.g., much American nationalist fervor after the September 11 crimes). However, I would not accept such a formulation generally. (I should note that, though I do not agree with the framework presented by Brown, that framework does help him to present insightful analyses of a number of cases of nationalism.)