

Social Identity and Affect as Determinants of Collective Action

Toward an Integration of Relative Deprivation and Social Identity Theories

Kerry Kawakami

UNIVERSITY OF NIJMEGEN

Kenneth L. Dion

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

ABSTRACT. The goal of this paper is to compare and contrast relative deprivation and social identity theories in an attempt to form an integrative model of social comparison. The model posits that, depending on the determinants of salience, people come to categorize themselves as individuals or group members. When personal or group self-identities are salient, individuals engage in intragroup or intergroup comparisons respectively. Negative outcomes from these comparisons result in negative social identities. These personal or group self-identities, in combination with perceptions of the position as illegitimate, are hypothesized to result in feelings of personal and group relative deprivation (RD) respectively. Depending on their feelings of RD, individuals adopt individual or collective actions to change their status. When personal RD is experienced, individuals will first attempt normative individual actions to change their status. If these attempts fail, non-normative individual action strategies will be adopted. When group RD is experienced, individuals will initially attempt non-normative collective actions to change their status. If these type of actions fail, individuals will attempt normative collective actions.

Why do people rebel? What variables are essential for social protest to occur? When do disadvantaged conditions (i.e. poverty, discrimination and inequity) lead to such collective actions as petitioning, striking, rioting or political violence? Although the significance of these questions is obvious, social psychologists have yet to provide an adequate explanation of collective protest in response to perceived disadvantage. One possible basis for this failure may be the lack of theoretical coordination related to the study of intragroup and intergroup processes (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). Past neglect of intergroup relations as a topic of study in social psychology and widely dispersed research groups are two reasons why few steps have been taken to form a coherent perspective on group processes.

Theoretical integration beyond the level of mini-theories is one strategy to remedy the situation and achieve a solid theoretical base (Jackson, 1988; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). To achieve this goal, a concentrated and coordinated research effort is needed in which prominent theories of intergroup relations are systematically examined and interrelated.

In the present paper, we explore potential relationships between relative deprivation theory (RDT) and social identity theory (SIT). Self-categorization theory (SCT), closely linked to SIT, is also included in the analysis. These theories, besides being highly similar, were chosen because of their major influence on the study of social actions in response to perceived inequalities. Specifically, the main goal of the present paper is to examine past and current versions of social identity and relative deprivation theories in an attempt to better understand and predict group or collective action. A comparison of their major weaknesses and strengths along with a possible integration of theories are explored. Finally, recent research relevant to an integrative model is discussed.

Common and Unique Contributions

Common Contributions

Common to all three theories is the belief that people learn about themselves by comparison with relevant others, and that these comparisons help define their relationships to the social world (Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, & Williams, 1949; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). The importance of personal and social levels of comparison is also emphasized by all three theories (Hogg & McGarty, 1990; Runciman, 1966; Smith & Griffen, 1990; Taylor & Dubé, 1986). This distinction has proven useful in a variety of research areas (Dion, 1986; Dubé & Guimond, 1986; Martin, 1986; Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972) and aids theorists in avoiding the ecological fallacy of not specifying the level of comparison in relation to individual and group action (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). Finally, all three theories focus on intergroup processes and assume perceivers readily divide their social environment into discrete social categories which enable them to impose order on interpersonal situations. Association with a particular category has important implications for social comparison and self-evaluation processes.

Unique Contributions of RDT

RDT uniquely enriches intergroup theorizing in several ways. First, it focuses not only on cognitions but also on the affect related to negative consequences resulting from social comparisons (Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984).

Specifically, the first component of RD is the perception of inequality—the belief that a discrepancy exists between one's own position (either as an individual or as a group) and the position of a 'referent other' on some evaluative dimension. The second component of RD is the affect related to the perceived inequality—the intensity of discontent experienced concerning the perceived gap between the two positions. This distinction has helped researchers examine the relationship between magnitude of inequality and feelings of satisfaction and perceived injustice (Dion, 1986; Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983). Most current RD theorists (Dubé & Guimond, 1986; Martin, 1986; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984), although acknowledging the importance of perceptions of inequality in determining the impact of comparison outcomes on RD, emphasize feelings of discontent and injustice as the key mediators in predicting behaviour.

Finally, RDT researchers gather data from a wide variety of existing 'real world' groups utilizing predominantly archival or survey methods. These samples have included African-Americans, Chinese-Canadians, blue-collar workers and female secretaries. By studying actual, long-standing groups, RDT has provided us with insights into when victims of prejudice and discrimination will respond to enduring conditions of often extreme disadvantage (Dion, 1986). By gathering externally valid data, investigators have expanded our understanding of social protest and political violence (Gurr, 1970; Martin, 1986; Pettigrew, 1967).

Unique Contributions of SIT

SIT proposes that social comparisons lead to positive, neutral or negative self-evaluations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). One strength of SIT is its explicit focus on the importance of social identities in intergroup processes. Group memberships are not merely labels individuals use to distinguish themselves from others but often provide a locus of identification for the self. By inclusion into some categories and exclusion from others, together with the values and emotional significance of that membership, we define our social identity. As individuals define themselves in terms of a specific group, they come to evaluate the group, and by association themselves, accordingly. SIT, therefore, includes differential identification between various ingroups in its analysis. High-status group members, for example, identify more with their group than low-status members. Ellemers and her colleagues (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993) have suggested that identification is attenuated by the permeability of group boundaries, group stability and legitimacy. Closed groups in which movement out of one's current group into another is not possible and unstable and illegitimate low status of one's group result in members identifying more with their group. The implications of high vs

low ingroup identification for intergroup processes may prove to be critical in future research on intergroup relations.

Another contribution of SIT is its attempt to pin down the motivations for intergroup processes. According to SIT, individuals desire to view their own group as positive and distinct in relation to relevant comparison groups. To reach this goal, people look for and recognize intergroup differences favouring their own group (Hinkle & Brown, 1990). By examining why such social comparisons occur, SIT attempts to understand and predict more precisely possible action strategies. When social comparisons lead to adequate social identities (positive and distinct), we attempt to maintain or extend this superiority. Alternatively, when social comparisons lead to inadequate social identities, we attempt to change the situation. Although social identification is implicit in RDT, issues related to self-esteem, group membership and positive group distinctiveness are less central.

Finally, although exceptions exist (i.e. Brown & Smith, 1989; Ellemers et al., 1990), social identity theorists have often utilized laboratory experiments of students divided into ad hoc groups based on arbitrary criteria. SIT evolved from studies utilizing this minimal group paradigm. This methodology has not only provided strong evidence that intergroup 'discrimination' can occur in the absence of conditions previously thought necessary to eliciting negative intergroup relations, but has also enabled researchers to control many extraneous variables related to the study of existing social groups.

Unique Contributions of SCT

SCT, like SIT, focuses on social identity and proposes that a person's self-concept comprises the group self and the personal self (Hogg & McGarty, 1990; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). SCT, however, places more emphasis on cognitions underlying social categorization and social comparison processes. Specifically, SCT attempts to provide a theoretical link between personal and group identity and to examine the interaction between intragroup and intergroup levels (Grant, 1990). Although RDT assumes that both group and personal levels of comparison can co-occur, for example individuals can feel 'doubly deprived' when they experience both personal and group RD simultaneously (Runciman, 1966; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984), SCT proposes a functional antagonism between group and individual identities. According to Turner and his colleagues (1987), perceptions of self as an individual and as a group member cannot mutually coincide at the same time. Self-perceptions are conceptualized as a continuum ranging from perception of self as an individual to perception of self as a member of an ingroup category. Depending on the salience of a self-categorization at any moment, one

particular identity can become cognitively emphasized to act as the immediate influence on perception and behaviour (Brown & Turner, 1981; Reid & Sumiga, 1984; Turner et al., 1987). Salience of personal identity leads to perceptual accentuation of differences between one's self and the ingroup and consistencies within one's self. Under these conditions, we act and think as individuals (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Hogg & McGarty, 1990; Turner et al., 1987). Salience of group identity, alternatively, leads to perceptual accentuation of similarities between oneself and the ingroup and differences between the ingroup and an outgroup. Under these conditions, we act and think as group members.

In contrast to RDT's and SIT's focus on affect, self-esteem and positive distinctiveness in intergroup processes, SCT places greater emphasis on salient self-categorization (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Hogg & McGarty, 1990). The impact of salient self-categorization has received strong empirical support in a number of research areas, such as spontaneous self-concepts (Cota & Dion, 1986; McGuire, McGuire, Child, & Fujioka, 1978), endorsement of specific attitudes (Abrams, Thomas, & Hogg, 1990; Reid & Sumiga, 1984), stereotyping (Hogg & Turner, 1987; Oakes & Turner, 1986), attributions (Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991) and behaviour (Espinoza & Garza, 1985; Reicher, 1984). By focusing on the process of depersonalization, changing from a personal level of identity to a group level, SCT applies not only to intergroup discrimination but also to group phenomena such as social influence, polarization and group cohesion (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Turner et al., 1987).

Although SCT and SIT emphasize different mechanisms in intergroup processes, they are not incompatible or antagonistic. One can characterize the differences between the theories as a shift in focus in the specific stages of the process. SIT emphasizes resultant intergroup biases. After adopting an identity, we seek to make our social identity positively distinct and therefore ingroup biases can occur. SCT, alternatively, focuses on the initial phases of self-categorizations and attempts to explain how varying levels of social identities function and why. Once an identity is salient, we act according to conditions and circumstances related to those identities. SCT's emphasis on accessibility and fit reflect current social cognitive interests on construct activation and category-based inferences (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Sherman, Judd, & Park, 1989).

Common and Unique Deficiencies

Common Deficiencies

All three theories fail to specify precisely how and why people choose certain comparison others as referents (Pettigrew, 1967; Taylor, Moghaddam, & Bellerose, 1989; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). A further

problem for RDT and SIT involves empirical support for the effects of legitimacy. Although both theories stress that only individuals who feel that they are entitled to and deserve the desired dimension will experience RD or take ameliorative actions in response to negative social comparison outcomes, research on the effects of legitimacy has been ambiguous (Bernstein & Crosby, 1980; Cook, Crosby, & Hennigan, 1977; Ellemers et al., 1993; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). Perceptions of legitimacy are related to some extent to feelings of responsibility for one's situation. Individuals who blame themselves or their own group for not having the valued dimension may believe that the discrepancy between their own or their group's position and a referent's position may be just and consequently will not feel dissatisfied and take action.

Unique Deficiencies of RDT

A major weakness of RDT is that empirical findings have not consistently demonstrated a relationship between the strength of RD feelings and the perceived discrepancy between the comparison positions. For example, it is possible to increase experimentally the perception of an economic gap between two groups or between an individual and an ingroup without an inevitable increase in dissatisfaction (Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983). This discrepancy is especially apparent with regards to intragroup comparisons. Although a number of studies have found negative outcomes from intergroup comparisons to be related to feelings of group deprivation, relatively few studies have found outcomes from intragroup comparisons to be associated with feelings of personal relative deprivation. In fact, many researchers (Dion, 1986; Dubé & Guimond, 1986; Martin, 1982, 1986) have found no significant relationship between intragroup comparisons and feelings of either personal or group deprivation. These findings suggest that, at least to some extent, the cognitive component related to social comparisons is independent of the affective component.

An issue related to the cognitive-affective discrepancy is an alleged denial of discrimination. Crosby (1982), in an extensive survey of middle-class working women in Massachusetts, found that although women were aware of and upset about the extent of discrimination that most women face on the job, they were relatively unaware of the discrimination that they presumably had personally experienced. Even though these women perceived that women as a group received a relatively smaller income than was just, they did not perceive that they themselves received less than was fair. The finding that group members consistently perceived a higher level of discrimination directed at the group as a whole in comparison to discrimination directed at themselves personally has been demonstrated with a variety of groups (Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990; Taylor, Wright, & Ruggiero, 1991).

One possible reason for the latter finding is that the people may have chosen different comparison groups in responding to the questions. For example, when working women are asked to describe their personal work situation, they may compare their individual situation with another female worker (an intragroup comparison). Alternatively, when they are asked to describe the work situation of female workers in general, they may compare the situation of the average female worker with the situation of the average male worker (an intergroup comparison). This explanation underlines a larger problem in RD theorizing and research—confusion in the use of intragroup (egoistical) deprivation and intergroup (fraternalistic) deprivation concepts. Although Runciman (1966) defined egoistical RD as feelings of deprivation due to intragroup comparisons and fraternalistic RD as feelings of deprivation due to intergroup comparisons, individual–outgroup comparisons have been classified with both terms. Some researchers have even classified feelings related to intragroup comparisons with the fraternalistic term. This carelessness leads to problems in predicting and interpreting associated ameliorative (individual and collective) actions.

Another problem related to RDT is the inconsistent empirical support for the link between intensity of RD and action. Although this may be partially due to the confusion in concepts discussed above, the question remains: when do feelings of RD result in action? According to RDT, individuals who experience personal RD choose individual action strategies to improve their situation and individuals who experience group RD choose collective action strategies to improve their group's position (Dion, 1986; Walker & Mann, 1987; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). Although a study by Dubé and Guimond (1986) concerning Québec francophones' support for the Québec nationalist movement and a study by Tougas and Veilleux (1988) concerning women's dissatisfaction with their group's situation in the workforce reveal mediating effects of RD in collective action, a number of researchers have demonstrated that feelings of personal or group RD do not guarantee individual or collective actions (Martin, 1986; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990).

Unique Deficiencies of SIT

All three theories maintain that individuals who perceive intragroup inequalities will prefer individually oriented strategies to achieve change. However, while RDT and SCT further predict that individuals who perceive intergroup discrepancy will prefer group-oriented strategies to modify existing conditions, SIT predicts that the type of action an individual undertakes in an intergroup situation depends on his or her perceptions of cognitive alternatives. These alternatives are in part determined by the legitimacy and stability of the situation. When members

of a low-status group regard their situation as legitimate and stable, they will not attempt to change the status quo but will choose individual strategies to change their own position (Abrams, 1990). Alternatively, if individuals perceive their group's position to be illegitimate and unstable, they will choose collective actions to ameliorate their position. Permeability of group boundaries also influences choice of strategy. If membership into higher-status groups is possible, an individual advancement strategy may be chosen (Ellemers et al., 1990). Although an extensive range of individual and collective actions that individuals may adopt to improve their self-identity (e.g. personal mobility, absorption into the dominant group, redefining group characteristics) are described in the theory, SIT fails to specify the priority individuals give to particular action strategies and fails to outline clearly when individuals will adopt these strategies and how or why people choose one action over another (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987).

Social identity theorists have also had problems in providing empirical evidence to support the importance of positive distinctiveness in intergroup relations (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Hinkle & Brown, 1990). The necessity of a positive self-identity motive for social change has largely been tested in two ways: (a) as an enhancement in self-esteem resulting from successful intergroup discrimination in minimal group experiments; and (b) as threatened self-esteem (i.e. minority group status) promoting discrimination. Research has failed to provide strong support for either method (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). In fact, a common finding in the literature is that low-status group members often demonstrate outgroup favouritism. Furthermore, when multiple dimensions are compared in an intergroup context, ingroup favouritism is found for some dimensions, outgroup favouritism for other dimensions and no biases on yet other dimensions (Hinkle & Brown, 1990). If one assumes that low-status groups have the greatest motivation to manifest ingroup favouritism, these findings oppose SIT's proposition that group members create and maintain positive social identities by discriminating during intergroup comparisons.

Unique Deficiencies of SCT

Although the importance of salience to intergroup relations 'is not merely a "suggestion" but the corner-stone of the whole edifice' (Tajfel, 1982, p. 491), the specific conditions under which personal or group self-identities become salient and the interrelationship between these determinants remains unclear (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Hogg & McGarty, 1990; Kawakami & Dion, 1993). Examples of proposed determinants of salience of group self-identities are: (a) when group membership is novel, frequent or distinctive; (b) when goals or task orientations are group-related; (c) when group affiliations and categories are emphasized and social

entitativity is enhanced; (d) when groups are socioculturally and/or personally important to one's self-definition; (e) when the separation and clarity between groups are accentuated so that the perceived similarity and differences between individuals are correlated with division into group membership; (f) in intergroup competition and conflict situations; and (g) when explicit references to group identity are made (Brown & Turner, 1981; Cota & Dion, 1986; Dion, Earn, & Yee, 1978; Hogg & Turner, 1987; McGuire et al., 1978). The number of antecedents and questionable relevance of some factors (Oakes & Turner, 1986) indicates the need for a framework to categorize and specify the influence of determinants of salience. Although Turner et al. (1987) and Fiske and Taylor (1991) independently proposed such a framework, studies are needed to test these proposals.

Another problem related to SCT is its failure to incorporate affective or motivational components. Unlike SIT, SCT does not include any reference to self-esteem, positive distinctiveness, self-enhancement or motivation (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). By not formally rejecting or incorporating positive distinctiveness into the theory, the concept remains unresolved. Although SCT highlights cognitive mechanisms in intergroup processes, the theory may be yet another example of too much focus on cognition and not enough focus on the guts of the matter, the motive for why people rebel.¹ The inclusion of an affective or 'hot' component related to group identifications and relations is essential for successful predictions of intergroup processes (Pettigrew, 1986; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984).

An Integration of Theories

In recent years, a number of researchers have begun to link social identity and self-categorization concepts to RDT (Dubé & Guimond, 1986; Kawakami & Dion, 1993; Smith, Spears, & Oyen, 1994; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). Because many of the concepts and theoretical assumptions underlying the three theories are largely similar, an integrated model coincides for the most part with the existing theoretical outlines. Each theory, however, also adds its own distinctive contributions to the integrative model. This section begins with a brief description of the basic framework of the integrative model and its constraints, after which contributions of the model to intergroup theory and preliminary empirical support are explored.

To simplify this initial attempt at integrating RDT, SIT and SCT, the intergroup situation was constrained in a number of ways. Future research, however, may demonstrate that it is possible to extend the integrative model by abandoning these limitations without altering its basic structure. First, the model limits its attention to comparison situations in which group

membership is closed. In closed groups, movement out of one's current group into another is difficult (e.g. sex or racial comparison situations). Until recently RD theorists, for the most part, have investigated situations in which groups boundaries are closed (Martin, 1986). Social identity theorists, on the other hand, have extensively utilized ad hoc 'minimal' groups, enabling them to examine strategies of change for groups with both open and closed type boundaries. By initially focusing on closed groups, the authors hope to restrict predictions related to possible ameliorative actions (Ellemers et al., 1990, 1993; Taylor & McKirnan, 1984; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987; Wright et al., 1990). Second, only intergroup situations in which social comparisons result in negative outcomes will be examined. While SIT and RDT have in the past incorporated positive outcomes from social comparison (e.g. an adequate social identity and relative gratification), both theories have generally emphasized intergroup situations which result in negative outcomes. Further investigations are necessary to examine carefully the effects of high status and positive outcomes of social comparisons on self-identities, RD and resultant actions. Third, the integrative model will focus on 'illegitimate' intergroup situations in which the status differentials are not fixed and are considered unjustified by the disadvantaged group. Although past empirical support for the importance of legitimacy and stability has been weak, the authors agree with relative deprivation and social identity theorists who continue to emphasize the importance of perceived justice (Ellemers et al., 1990, 1993).

The proposed integrative model of intergroup comparisons assumes that people come to learn about themselves, at least in part, through categorization and identification with social groups. In comparing themselves to their own group or in comparing their own group to an outgroup, their self-identities gain meaning and their actions become directed. The model posits that momentary situational and contextual factors have an important initial impact on the salience of different possible self-images. The concept of shifting and flexible self-categorizations is essential to understanding group processes. How people perceive themselves is not stable and constant, but varies across situations and goals. Determinants of salience can affect the level and the type of self-categorizations. In accordance with SCT, self-identities can be placed on a continuum which encompasses perceiving oneself exclusively as an individual at one end to perceiving oneself exclusively as a group member at the opposite end. When personal identity is salient, we act and think as individuals. Alternatively, when group identity is salient, we act and think as group members.

Determinants of salience can also affect the type of self-categorization. In most situations, people can classify themselves into a number of social groupings. Characteristics such as age, sex, race and socio-economic status are often used as a basis of classification. To the extent that distinct

levels and types of self-identities become salient, differential comparisons may also become differentially emphasized. Salient personal identities lead to intragroup comparisons through a perceptual accentuation of differences between one's self and the ingroup. Salient group identities, alternatively, lead to intergroup comparisons through a perceptual accentuation of differences between the ingroup and an outgroup. Distinct types of social identities influence the choice and relevance of specific comparison others. The importance of type of social identity will be discussed subsequently in more detail.

The model further posits that outcomes from intragroup and intergroup comparisons can lead to negative self-identities when the comparison dimension is central to the salient identities. Specifically, negative outcomes from comparing oneself to one's ingroup can lead to a negative personal identity when the comparison dimension is integral to that salient identity. Negative outcomes from comparing one's ingroup to an outgroup, alternatively, can lead to a negative group identity when the comparison dimension is integral to that salient identity.

Negative identities in combination with perceptions of the inequitable position as illegitimate result in feelings of relative deprivation. Particularly, negative personal identities, along with beliefs that one's individual status is unfair, will result in feelings of personal RD. Negative group identities, along with beliefs that one's group status is unfair, will result in feelings of group RD. Depending on the extent of feelings of relative deprivation, individuals will seek individual action or collective action to change their status. Individual action is a behaviour that is directed at improving the position of the individual and occurs when strong feelings of personal RD are experienced. Collective action, on the other hand, is directed at improving the position of the entire group (Wright et al., 1990) and occurs when a group member is acting as a representative member of the group and when strong feelings of group RD are experienced.

An important distinction between various responses to disadvantaged group and individual identities is the normative/non-normative contrast (Martin, 1986; Wright et al., 1990). Normative action strategies conform to the standards of the existing social system. Non-normative action strategies, alternatively, are outside the confines of existing social rules. The proposed model posits that individuals who experience negative personal identities will prefer normative individual actions such as trying harder. However, when normative strategies are not possible, non-normative individual action strategies such as quitting or individually protesting are adopted. When the advantaged group is closed, collective non-normative strategies, arguably the most socially disruptive actions, are preferred for group members who experience negative group identities. Because North Americans believe that there is something inherently wrong about any evaluations about themselves that are based on their membership in a

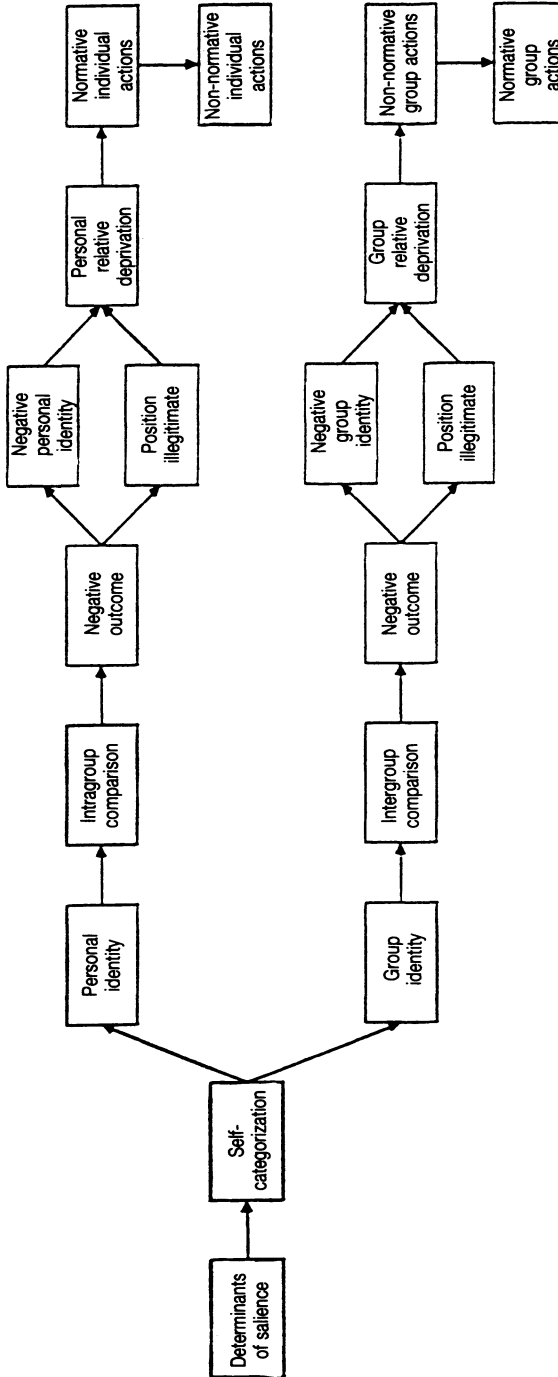


FIGURE 1. Integrative model of intragroup and intergroup comparisons.

social category (Taylor & Dubé, 1986), outcomes influenced by race, sex, age and so forth may be deemed unfair in principle. Group members, therefore, may believe that the violation of these established norms of equity may only be resolved with collective non-normative actions. An example of such an action is challenging the position of the more positively evaluated group. In this situation normative action strategies, such as redefining the comparison dimension so that it is positively evaluated or creating/adopting new, more positive dimensions on which to compare, may be perceived as ineffective in solving the problem and thus only be utilized as a last resort.

Figure 1 represents an overview of the integrative model of intragroup and intergroup comparisons. Although the process is depicted as a uni-directional model, bi-directional influences between factors are also possible. For example, it is proposed that salient social identities influence the choice of level of social comparisons and therefore the perceptions related to those comparisons. It is also possible, however, that perceptions of social comparisons outcomes influence which social identities become salient and influence identification with the ingroup (Ellemers et al., 1993; Turner et al., 1987). For example, salient group identities may lead to a focus on perceptions of negative outcomes from intergroup comparisons, and, alternatively, negative outcomes from intergroup comparisons may heighten the salience of group identities.

How Does the Integrative Model Contribute to Our Knowledge of Group Processes?

Before undertaking an integrative model of intergroup relations, it is important to ask 'Why is an integration necessary?' and 'How does it contribute to our knowledge of group processes?' We propose that an integration of SIT, SCT and RDT will enable future researchers in the domain of intergroup relations to resolve many of the problems found in each individual theory. Some of these questions, as previously reviewed, are: How is the level of comparison chosen? Why are perceptions of group discrimination often more severe than perceptions of personal discrimination? How are perceptions of inequality related to feelings of RD? Why is a negative self-identity not always associated with discrimination? Why are feelings of RD not always predictive of action?

Salient Self-Identities and Social Comparisons

The integrated model predicts that determinants of salience influence social comparisons in a number of ways. First, salience can influence the level of comparison by determining the level of self-categorization. If self-

categorization is perceived to be a continuum, the likelihood that either personal or group self-identity will be adopted in a given situation is a function of the determinants of salience. Factors which encourage more salient personal identities will lead to intragroup comparisons. Factors which encourage more salient group identities, alternatively, will lead to intergroup comparisons. Because salience of extreme personal and group identities leads to antagonistic responses (accentuating or minimizing intragroup differences), this model proposes that individuals can focus on either intragroup or intergroup comparisons, but not on both levels simultaneously (Kawakami & Dion, 1993). When salience encourages less extreme self-identities (i.e. identities which fall closer to the mid-point of the continuum), both intragroup and intergroup comparisons may occur, but the emphasis placed on these comparisons and their impact on subsequent responses will differ according to the relative distance of the salient identities to either end of the continuum.²

Second, determinants of salience can also influence social comparisons by determining the type of social categorization adopted. Momentary contextual factors affect the predominance of numerous possible self-categorizations. For example, besides thinking of herself as an individual, the first author can also think of herself at times as a woman, a Japanese-Canadian or a young person. The emphasis placed on the importance of each category can vary according to the situational determinants of salience. In perceiving others and ourselves, there is no basic categorization, as has been previously suggested (Rosch, 1978), but level and type of abstraction changes with the frame of reference (Turner et al., 1987). Because type of social categorization, as well as level of categorization, influence later social comparison processes, it is crucial to determine when categories or combinations of categories (i.e. subtypes) are likely to dominate. Which social identity is adopted influences social comparison by limiting the range of potential relevant comparisons. If, for example, the first author's social identity as a woman was salient, relevant comparison groups may include men, female faculty or women in the past. Non-relevant comparison groups such as Japanese businessmen are a less likely choice of comparison in this context. Although these results demonstrate that even when specific identities are salient a number of significant comparisons are possible (Taylor et al., 1989), the relevance of certain groups as referents becomes more predictable. It is useful to note in this example that in some intergroup situations (i.e. women vs men) movement into the comparison group is closed and in other situations (i.e. women vs female faculty) movement into the comparison group is open. Specifically, when the first author identifies herself as a woman and compares with other men or female faculty, she may perceive that it is possible to become a member of the latter but not the former group. Permeability of group boundaries is not necessarily defined by type of salient self-identity.

The concept of salient social identities and differential emphasis on levels of comparison may also help explain, at least partially, the person–group discontinuities reviewed earlier in which group discrimination was consistently perceived as more severe than personal discrimination (Crosby, 1982; Taylor & Dubé, 1986; Taylor et al., 1990, 1991). According to the integrative model, contexts which make our personal identity salient accentuate differences within the group and lead to intragroup comparisons. In such situations, because of the accentuation effect, individuals may not only perceive the intragroup differences to be larger but they may also perceive the personal circumstances related to their salient personal identities to be more important than their group's circumstances. Alternatively, contexts which make group identity salient accentuate perceived intragroup similarity and intergroup differences and lead to a focus on intergroup comparisons. In such situations, individuals may not only perceive the intergroup differences compared to the intragroup differences to be larger but they may also perceive the circumstances related to their personal identities to be less relevant to their salient self-identity than their group's circumstances. Salient self-identities determine not only the level of social comparison and the extent to which we differentiate from the comparison other, but also the importance placed on the outcome of the comparison.

Because of a confrontational element and important socio-cultural distinctions between the referent groups, many RD studies have focused on environments which emphasize group identities and intergroup rather than intragroup comparisons. For example, some of the topics recently studied by RD researchers have been: (a) blue-collar worker–management inequalities vs blue-collar worker ingroup inequalities; (b) male supervisor–female secretary inequalities vs female secretary ingroup inequalities; (c) anglophone–francophone inequalities vs francophone ingroup inequalities; (d) Chinese–Canadian inequalities vs Chinese personal experiences of discrimination; and (e) African-American–white American inequalities vs white American ingroup inequalities. In these types of situations the impact of personal identities and intragroup comparison outcomes may be diminished and the focus placed on intergroup outcomes. Individuals, therefore, may downplay the impact of their own experiences in comparison to other ingroup members or in comparison to the outgroup and accentuate the plight of the whole group in comparison to the outgroup.

In contrast, a situation which emphasizes one's personal identity will lead individuals to downplay the importance of group identity and outcomes from intergroup comparisons. Individuals in the latter situation will emphasize their personal standings and accentuate inequalities related to comparisons with the ingroup. An academic exam situation is an example of a context in which personal identities may be salient

(Kawakami & Dion, 1993). Because of the individualistic nature of North American school systems (Aronson, 1984), outcomes from comparisons within a class may be more important than outcomes from comparisons between classes. This may lead one to focus on and even accentuate any within-class differences and to de-emphasize or ignore between-class discrepancies.

Negative Outcomes, Negative Self-Identities and Relative Deprivation

The mediating effects of self-identities can also help resolve the inconsistent results often found in RD studies with regard to perceptions of inequality and feelings of relative deprivation. The need for a positive self-image, not negative consequences per se, is proposed as an important mediator for intergroup processes. The proposition that adequacy of self-identities, not simply outcomes related to social comparisons, determines our responses is closely related to SIT's emphasis on the importance of positive distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

According to the integrative model, only negative outcomes from dimensions integral to salient self-identities are predictive of feelings of discontentment and dissatisfaction. When social comparison outcomes are less relevant to salient self-identities, strong feelings of negative affect do not occur. The model assumes that comparison dimensions important to the current identity are being evaluated. Specifically, when perceptions of negative outcomes resulting from intragroup comparisons lead to negative personal identities and this status is perceived to be illegitimate, feelings of personal RD will occur. When perceptions of negative outcomes from intergroup comparisons lead to negative group identities and this status is perceived to be illegitimate, feelings of group RD will occur. However, in situations where comparison dimensions are unimportant to self-identity, social comparison outcomes will have less of an impact on self-identities and feelings of relative deprivation.

An example may help clarify this process. When non-traditional women compare their wages to men and perceive that men earn more money than they do and they perceive this outcome to be illegitimate, they may experience group RD because earning a fair wage is important to their self-perception of women as competent. When traditional women, however, perceive that men earn more, they may not experience group RD. This may occur because these women do not perceive the discrepancy to be illegitimate (i.e. men deserve to earn more money) and/or earning a fair wage is unimportant to their image of themselves as women (i.e. being feminine and a good homemaker may be more important). Although this example demonstrates the importance of comparison dimensions to self-

identities and resultant emotions, the question remains, however, as to when a comparison dimension will be important or unimportant to social identity. Research investigating conceptual bases for predicting a priori the centrality of comparison dimensions to social identities is clearly needed (Hinkle & Brown, 1990).

Negative Social Identities, Relative Deprivation and Action

The integrative model predicts that negative social identities and perceptions of status as illegitimate mediate feelings of RD, and subsequently ameliorative action. As reviewed earlier, one of the major limitations of social identity theories, especially SCT, has been their emphasis on cognition to the exclusion of affect (Johnston & Hewstone, 1990). Although social cognition processes have provided much insight into intergroup relations, the latter cannot be understood solely in terms of perceptions related to social comparisons. In underlining the importance of emotions in human processes and linking these reactions to social identities, the integrative model may also help to resolve the weak results found by social identity theorists concerning the adequacy of the social identity-action link. Specifically, the relationship between self-esteem, motivation for a positive self-identity and resultant action discussed earlier needs to be re-examined. Why is it that social identity researchers have not found consistent evidence that groups with low self-esteem and presumably a negative self-identity discriminate more than groups with high self-esteem? In fact, why is it that researchers often find that groups with high self-esteem engage more in discrimination and that groups with low self-esteem engage in outgroup favouritism?

A number of possible solutions have been offered for this dilemma. First, it may be that low group status is not equivalent to low self-esteem (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). Members of low-status groups do not suffer from enduring low self-esteem but such feelings are engaged in particular contexts. With regard to the integrative model, this would imply that although a low-status self-identity might be salient, only if the outcome from a specific social comparison is perceived to be negative would a negative social identity lead to feelings of RD and action. Second, outgroup favouritism in low-status groups may be eliminated if their position is perceived to be illegitimate and unstable (Hinkle & Brown, 1990). Under the latter conditions, low-status groups may actually demonstrate the ingroup favouritism predicted by SIT. This would make sense according to the integrative model. The objective reality of the high-status group's position may be undeniable and therefore individuals would acknowledge the negative outcome from a social comparison. To deny reality would be highly dysfunctional in terms of dealing with the situation. It is important to know where one stands in order to improve one's

position. If the status is legitimate, individuals may perceive their lower status to be reasonable and therefore feelings of discontent will be lower. But if the situation is illegitimate, as delineated in the integrative model, individuals will perceive their position to be unjust and consequently experience strong feelings of RD and take ameliorative actions to remedy the situation. Although outgroup discrimination and ingroup bias are two examples of such action, other possible actions may not only be available, but also may be perceived to be more effective in attaining the desired goal (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). In fact, people may only resort to outgroup derogation in order to achieve a positive social identity when no alternative strategies are available (Mummendey & Schreiber, 1983). In contrast to SIT, the integrative model does not predict that the need for a positive group identity is met through intergroup comparisons (although at times this may also be the case), but that the need to improve a negative group identity and decrease feelings of RD are met primarily through collective actions, which may or may not include outgroup discrimination or ingroup favouritism. Furthermore, a negative social identity need not always mean low group self-esteem. If individuals perceive a negative outcome from a social comparison and these results reflect poorly on their social identity, they may experience lowered self-esteem but they may also experience other emotions such as anger, frustration and bitterness.

As detailed earlier, empirical findings concerning the link between personal and group RD and individual and collective actions, respectively, have often been inconsistent. This may be due, in part, to the limitations in past research concerning the types of behavioural responses measured or provided (Wright et al., 1990). According to Gurr (1970) in *Why Men Rebel*, the potential for collective violence varies with the intensity of RD and the proportion of its members who are intensely discontented. Belief in the utility and desirability of violence can motivate people to participate in political violence only if they are already discontented. Although the model predicts that discontent related to self-perceptions is the key to predicting behavioural responses, the utility of the behaviour to correcting the situation is also important. Weak results concerning the link between RD and action in past RD studies may be due to differences in perceptions of efficacy in resolving a specific negative situation in behaviour options.

The issue of efficacy is also important to the discussion of specific feelings of RD and types of behaviour action preference. According to the integrative model, individuals who are concerned with their group's position and feel dissatisfied with this position may realize that group action may be the most effective way to ameliorate the situation. If power is in numbers, the efficacy of improving your own position and taking individual actions in correcting group wrongs may be questionable. Alternatively, individuals dissatisfied with their own personal status will probably perceive individual action to be the most effective means of

improving their own situation. Collective action, under these circumstances, may be seen as too cumbersome and time-consuming.

Finally, by limiting the analysis to situations involving closed groups and in providing a link between level of social comparisons, social identities and explicit comparison referent in RD, the priority individuals will give to the different action strategies available to them becomes more predictable. The integrative model not only specifies the conditions under which individual or collective actions will be preferred, but also distinguishes between normative and non-normative actions. Individuals who possess negative personal identities and feel dissatisfied with their status will first attempt normative individual actions to change their position. If these attempts fail, non-normative individual action strategies will be adopted. Alternatively, individuals who possess inadequate group identities and feel dissatisfied with their group status may feel that established norms of equity have been violated and therefore will initially attempt non-normative collective actions to change their group position. If these type of actions fail, individuals may attempt normative collective actions as a last resort.

Initial Support and Future Possibilities

Portions of the integrative model have received strong empirical support in recent years. Smith et al. (1994) and Brewer and Weber (1994), for example, provided evidence for the relationship between the initial components of the process—salient self-identities and level of comparison. In accordance with the integrative model, Smith et al. (1994) found that when group identity is salient, subjects may focus on intergroup and not intragroup comparison outcomes. To begin the study, all subjects received negative outcomes from an intergroup comparison in the form of a subject payment distribution which indicated that only 3 of the 11 psychology students would receive money in comparison to 8 of the 11 economics students. Subjects, additionally, received positive or negative outcomes from an intragroup comparison by being included or not among the psychology students who would receive money. When asked to replicate the payment distribution, subjects whose group identity was salient reported that more economics subjects would receive money ($M = 4.39$) than subjects whose personal identity was salient ($M = 2.05$). No differences between conditions were found with regard to the subjects' estimates of the number of psychology students who would receive money ($M = 2.41$).

Brewer and Weber (1994) have further examined the impact of salient identities and level of social comparison on self-evaluations. Subjects were

categorized as either underestimators or overestimators ostensibly based on a dot estimation task and asked to view a videotape of a student identified as either an ingroup or outgroup member. The student was portrayed as either highly competent (upward comparison) or incompetent (downward comparison) academically. Brewer and Weber found that when personal identity was salient, intragroup comparisons resulted in strong contrast effects. Specifically, self-ratings of academic performance were lower when the comparison student was an ingroup member and was outstanding rather than poor academically. When the comparison student was an outgroup member, however, exposure to various academic abilities resulted in no differences in self-ratings. Alternatively, when group identity was salient, intergroup comparisons resulted in strong contrast effects. Specifically, self-ratings were lower when the comparison student was an outgroup member and was outstanding rather than poor academically. Interestingly, Brewer and Weber also found that when group identity was salient and subjects were exposed to intragroup comparisons, they tended to assimilate the results of the comparison other. Self-ratings were higher when the ingroup comparison was highly competent rather than incompetent academically.

Studies by Kawakami and Dion (1993), Lalonde and Silverman (1994) and Ellemers et al. (1993) focused on the later components of the model—the impact of salient self-identities on feelings of RD and ameliorative action. In the Kawakami and Dion (1993) study a role-play procedure was utilized in which subjects were asked to place themselves in the role of a hypothetical student in a psychology class. Subjects' perceptions of intragroup and intergroup inequalities were manipulated by describing the student's grade (or the average grade of the student's tutorial group) as either slightly lower or a great deal lower than the average grade of their tutorial group (or another tutorial group). Salience of the student's personal or group identity was also manipulated in the scenario. The results indicated that subjects whose group rather than personal identity was salient responded as group members and hence reported less satisfaction and perceived justice in comparing intergroup inequalities (group RD). These subjects were also more likely to take collective actions such as asking for help and working harder. Conversely, those whose personal rather than group identities were salient responded as individuals and hence were more likely to take individual actions such as quitting, switching groups and complaining to the professor. These subjects, however, did not report less satisfaction and perceived justice in comparing intragroup inequalities (personal RD).

Lalonde and Silverman (1994) examined the importance of salience (group salience vs no salience) and group permeability (open vs token vs closed) on subsequent action. In accordance with the integrative model, when group identity was salient, subjects reported more discrimination and

more injustice and chose collective actions (i.e. soliciting support via petitions) more often than subjects whose group identity was not salient. This was especially true when entrance into the favoured group was closed. When group identity was not salient (and individual identity was presumably salient) and the boundaries into the favoured group were at least partially open, subjects overwhelmingly chose normative individual actions (i.e. acceptance of the situation or asking for an individual retest) over non-normative individual actions (i.e. exiting the situation) and collective actions. When group identity was salient in a closed group situation, subjects chose collective actions to respond to the situation.

Lastly, Ellemers and her colleagues (1993) further supported the link between negative outcomes, salient self-identities and preference for individual or collective ameliorative strategies. When the low-status position of the ingroup can be improved because of unstable group status or when group membership is fixed because of impermeable group boundaries, subjects choose collective strategies to improve their standings. The authors suggested, in accordance with the integrative model, that when low group status is the result of collective mistreatment and group identity is salient, striving for group not personal mobility is the primary corrective strategy. Alternatively, when subjects are treated as individuals and personal identity is salient, collective strategies are less relevant to their status improvement. In such circumstances, subjects will prefer strategies that fulfil more individual ambitions. Although the integrative model predicts that salient self-identities determine level of comparison and therefore one's focus on individual or group outcomes, the Ellemers et al. (1993) study suggests that negative outcomes may influence salient self-identities. As discussed earlier, however, it is possible that the causal sequence is bi-directional. More importantly, these approaches agree that both components affect the type of strategies preferred to correct negative self-identities and status.

Although only the Kawakami and Dion (1993) experiment was specifically designed to test the integrative model, the research described above has provided strong evidence for the proposed intergroup process. Notably, all of these studies were conducted by different investigators in several countries using diverse methodologies and yet have demonstrated the close interrelationship between the components of the model. First, a number of studies (Brewer & Weber, 1994; Kawakami & Dion, 1993; Smith et al., 1994) have provided support for the importance of salient self-identities to the accentuation of either intragroup or intergroup comparison outcomes. Brewer and Weber (1994) have furthermore produced evidence for the link between salient self-identities, level of comparison and resultant self-identities/self-evaluations. Third, the relationships among salient self-identities, social comparison outcomes and feelings of RD have also been demonstrated (Kawakami & Dion, 1993). Lastly, research has

convincingly established the impact of salient self-identities on ameliorative actions (Ellemers et al., 1993; Kawakami & Dion, 1993; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994). Depending on whether personal or group identities are salient, individual or collective action strategies, respectively, may be preferred.

Although the integrative model has received strong support from a number of different sources, an investigation of the model as a whole is clearly needed. Causal modelling would be useful to test the importance of each element as a mediator and the model's overall explanatory power. Future research is also needed to examine more closely the impact of salient identities. Although the model describes a continuum of self-identities with personal or group self-identities becoming more or less salient as they near the bipolar extremes, the emphasis of the integrative model and the research related to salience has focused on the extreme ends of the continuum, when either personal self-identity or group self-identity is very salient. This limitation highlights the need for some type of quantification of level of self-identity and structure for determinants of salience. A related problem is the relationship between level of salient self-identity and type of social comparison. Although the integrative model predicts that level of comparison is determined by the salient self-identity, recent findings have suggested that at times it may be possible that individuals with salient group identities may focus on intragroup comparisons, not intergroup comparisons (Smith et al., 1994). This occurrence may be due to the position of the salient self-identity along the continuum. When a self-identity is not extremely positioned, intragroup comparisons, intergroup comparisons and possibly even both types of social comparisons may occur simultaneously.

Conclusion

Although all three theories agree that ameliorative actions can occur if social comparison outcomes are negative and if the situation is perceived as illegitimate, they specify different mediating variables of such collective actions. RDT requires strong feelings of personal or group RD, SIT an inadequate self-identity and SCT that personal or group self-identity is salient. The integrative model proposes that all three variables work in combination to instigate action. As previously stated, salient self-identities affect the level of comparison. The outcome of this comparison, if based on a dimension which is important to the salient identity, influences self-evaluations. In combination with perceptions of legitimacy, negative personal and group identities influence feelings of personal and group RD. In response to RD, it is reasonable to assume that individuals may take a number of different courses of action to change their status.

In recent years, the study of intragroup and intergroup processes has attracted many new followers. Because the number of investigations in this research area is rapidly expanding, integration is now, more than ever, critical. Coordination in theorizing and research will speed the achievement of new knowledge by avoiding redundancy and encouraging new viewpoints and methodologies. This paper, in proposing an integrated model of social comparisons, is a step towards a coordinated effort. In combining the contributions of RDT, SIT and SCT, this effort hopefully better reflects the complexity of social psychological processes and may allow us to predict intragroup and intergroup relations more precisely.

Notes

1. The authors would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this insightful comment.
2. The perceived outcome of the comparison may even serve to influence which level of comparison will dominate the subject's emotions and behaviours. For example, when the outcome of one level of comparison is particularly negative, the subject may strategically choose to emphasize the other level of comparison (Smith, Spears, & Oyen, 1994). When the self-identities are located closer to the extreme ends of the continuum, however, this strategy becomes less of an option because of accentuation of intragroup or intergroup differences.

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KERRY KAWAKAMI is Assistant Professor of Psychology at the Catholic University Nijmegen. She received her PhD in 1995 from the University of Toronto. Her research interests include social cognition and intergroup processes—particularly the precursors and consequences of social categorization. She is currently examining the effects of prejudice on automatic stereotype activation. **ADDRESS:** Vakgroep Sociale Psychologie, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, Postbus 9104, 6500 HE Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

KENNETH L. DION is Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto. He pioneered research on prejudice and discrimination from the perspective of the victim or 'target' and has investigated this topic for the past 20 years utilizing various procedures (e.g. experiments, correlational studies and survey investigations) and theoretical approaches (namely a stress model, attribution theory, relative deprivation theory and discrimination theory). His other research interests as a social-personality and cross-cultural psychologist include gender, ethnicity, intergroup relations, stereotyping, acculturation and immigration. **ADDRESS:** Department of Psychology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1A1 (e-mail: Dionkl@psych.utoronto.ca).