

The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations: Can Research Inform Practice?

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In the four decades since the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka desegregation decision, social psychologists have generally avoided direct involvement in policy making in the arena of intergroup relations. A review of research and theory on the social psychology of intergroup relations since the 1960s is used to argue that it is time to renew such involvement. In recent years, policy making in the United States has shifted from assimilationism to various forms of pluralist or multicultural politics. This paper suggests that the route to multiculturalism may be perilous unless better informed by relevant social psychological research.

In 1991 the city of Dubuque, Iowa, was receiving considerable media attention in the United States for a controversial experiment in intergroup relations. Although Dubuque had only a tiny racial minority of 331 black residents scattered among its 58,000 residents, the city had been shocked by a cross-burning in 1989 that ignited a black family's garage. In response to this incident, Dubuque's city council established a task force of business leaders and school and city officials to review the situation and make recommendations for preventing future incidents of racial conflict in the city. Based on the idea that greater exposure to minority groups promotes tolerance, members of the task force concluded that Dubuque needed more minority citizens.

In May, 1991, the city council adopted a plan involving a system of incentives for local businesses to hire minorities, particularly blacks, with the goal of

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recruiting to Dubuque twenty new black families a year over the next five years. Even before the plan could be implemented in any meaningful way, the idea of an influx of black residents produced widespread reactance. Racial fights in the local high school and additional cross-burnings ensued. Rumors about the recruitment plan and its effect on local jobs, housing, and safety in the streets spread rapidly. Graffiti containing racial epithets appeared, and a group of young males organized a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of White People.

As the turmoil in Dubuque reached the news, the question arose as to what social psychologists had to say about the causes of racial tension in Dubuque, and the probable outcomes of the city council plan to increase minority presence. How do we answer such questions? Certainly it is not that social psychology has little to say about this situation. On the contrary, perhaps in a sense, we have too much to say! Understanding prejudice and intergroup conflict invokes virtually every area of social psychological inquiry—including the study of person perception, social attitudes, aggression, self-esteem, social comparison, equity, cooperation and competition, conformity and compliance, and group identification. Further, the study of prejudice crosses all our levels of analysis, from intraindividual to interpersonal to intergroup processes.

Research and Practice: Why the Gap?

From research in all of these areas, social psychologists have a wealth of relevant information about the cognitive and motivational underpinnings of stereotypes and attitudes toward social groups, about ingroup bias in intergroup perception, about effects of category-based expectancies on interpersonal encounters, and about the consequences of intergroup contact. Yet, in policy debates on issues of intergroup hostility, social psychological perspectives are less accessible than they should be. In recent years, findings from basic social psychological research have not been effectively linked to practice or public policy in the arena of intergroup relations.

The prevailing gap between research and practice is sometimes explained as a function of the fundamental differences between abstract theory that guides basic research and the highly contextualized realities of social problem solving and policy making. But the reasons go beyond this difference in epistemological base. At least two factors associated with the intellectual climate of social psychological research on intergroup relations also contribute to the gap between research and practice.

The first factor is the presence of research enclaves that have hindered the development of integrative theory in this area of research. The social psychological study of intergroup relations for a long time has been characterized by relatively encapsulated research traditions (Brewer, 1994). Table 1 provides one possible taxonomy of the different domains of research and theory that bear on our understanding of intergroup relations. The rows and columns of this table reflect two pervasive distinctions in what is being studied and how.

Table 1. Research Traditions in the Study of Intergroup Relations

	Level of Analysis	
	Individual/Interpersonal Processes	Group Processes
Cognition	–stereotyping	–social categorization –social identity
Affect/Attitudes	–prejudice/racism –unconscious evaluation	–intergroup contact
Behavior/Discrimination	–ingroup favoritism –aversive racism	–institutional racism –collective action

(adapted from Brewer, 1994)

Separate lines of research differ, first of all, in their level of analysis. Like most of social psychology, the study of intergroup relations can be differentiated into work that focuses on intraindividual and interpersonal processes on one hand, and work that focuses on the level of the group or social category on the other. Probably a majority of the research conducted within social psychology on issues of intergroup relations deals with intraindividual phenomena (beliefs, attitudes, and emotions toward social groups or group members) or with interpersonal interactions between individuals who are members of different social categories. Separate research traditions focus on the study of collective behavior, or on intergroup situations in which participants define themselves as representatives of their respective social groups.

Cross-cutting this distinction in levels of analysis are differences in whether the focus of study is on cognition, affect, or behavior. Different research traditions can be distinguished in terms of their emphasis on (1) the categorization and information-processing mechanisms that underlie the cognitive representations of social groups and group members, (2) the assessment of evaluative attitudes and affect toward specific groups, or (3) the behavioral manifestations of interpersonal and intergroup discrimination. Each of these components of intergroup phenomena has been studied at both the individual and the collective levels of analysis.

Research in the six different categories represented by the cells of Table 1 has been highly encapsulated, with little or no cross-citation or conceptual linkages among them. (A volume edited by Zanna & Olson, 1994, represents one exception to this pattern of research isolation. Contributions to this volume were presented at a symposium designed to bring together researchers from the domains of group cognition, social attitudes, and intergroup behavior for the purpose of cross-fertilization and synthesis.) In recent years there have been attempts to reconcile cognitive and affective processes (e.g., Mackie & Hamilton, 1993) and to link these to racial policy attitudes (e.g., Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), but the chasm between research on individual and group level phenomena remains largely unbridged.

A second contributing factor to the gap between basic research and practice is that scientifically oriented social psychologists have developed a strong reluctance to enter directly into policy arenas. The prevailing sentiment appears to be that it is our job to report our findings in published outlets, and it is up to those who wish to put those findings into practice to read the literature and draw appropriate conclusions. The translation from research to practice is left up to the policymakers themselves, often with a great deal of mistranslation along the route. If we feel misunderstood and underrecognized in the policy arena, it may be because we have failed to meet policy makers halfway in drawing out the implications of our research and theory.

A Call to Action: The Contact Hypothesis

The last time social psychologists got deeply involved in intergroup relations policy in this country was the well-known social science statement that was submitted as part of an amicus brief to the Supreme Court in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case which resulted in the 1954 ruling on school desegregation.

The social psychologists who wrote the 1953 statement (most of them SPSSI members, working in the Lewinian tradition of action research) argued against the "separate but equal" doctrine, claiming that segregation inevitably perpetuates prejudice and discriminatory outcomes for Negro children. Their arguments were grounded in the so-called "contact hypothesis"—the idea that prejudice and hostility are fed by separation and unfamiliarity, and that under the right conditions (i.e., equal-status, cooperative, and personalized interactions), intergroup contact reduces prejudice and conflict.

Since the 1950s, at least one line of experimental research in the social psychology of intergroup relations has continued to be directed by the contact hypothesis and its derivatives. During the 1980s, one advance toward a more integrative theory of intergroup relations was achieved when contact research was combined with concepts of social categorization and social identity theory to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the cognitive mechanisms by which cooperative contact is presumed to work (see Miller & Brewer, 1984; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Hewstone, 1996). The theoretical perspective rests on two basic premises: (1) Individuals organize their understanding of the social world on the basis of categorical distinctions that transform continuous variables into discrete classes; categorization has the effect of minimizing perceived differences within categories and accentuating intercategory differences (Tajfel, 1969); and (2) Since individual persons are themselves members of some social categories and not others, social categorization carries with it implicit ingroup-outgroup (we-they) distinctions; because of the self-relevance of social categories, the ingroup-outgroup classification is a superimposed category distinction with affective and emotional significance (Turner, 1985).

These two premises provide a framework for conceptualizing any social situation in which a particular ingroup-outgroup categorization is made salient. In effect, the theory posits a basic intergroup schema with the following characteristic features: (a) assimilation within category boundaries and contrast between categories, such that all members of the ingroup are perceived to be more similar to the self than members of the outgroup (the intergroup accentuation principle); (b) positive affect (trust, liking) selectively generalized to fellow ingroup members but not outgroup members (the ingroup favoritism principle); (c) intergroup social comparison associated with perceived negative interdependence between ingroup and outgroup (the social competition principle).

The affective and behavioral consequences of this schema lead to intergroup situations characterized by preferential treatment of ingroup members, mutual distrust between ingroup and outgroup, and intergroup competition. From this social categorization perspective, the issue to be addressed is how intergroup contact and cooperation can be structured so as to alter cognitive representations in ways that would eliminate one or more of the basic features of the negative intergroup schema.

Decategorization: The Personalization Model

One model derived from this perspective was based on the idea that contact will be most effective if interactions are highly personalized rather than category-based (Brewer & Miller, 1984). A primary consequence of categorization is the depersonalization of members of the outgroup. Social behavior in category-based interactions is characterized by a tendency to treat individual members of the outgroup as undifferentiated representatives of a unified social category. This perspective on the contact situation suggests that intergroup interactions should be structured so as to reduce the salience of category distinctions and to promote opportunities to get to know outgroup members as individuals. Attending to personal characteristics of group members not only provides the opportunity to disconfirm category stereotypes, it also breaks down the monolithic perception of the outgroup as a homogeneous unit (Wilder, 1978). In this scheme, the contact situation encourages attention to information at the individual level that replaces category identity as the most useful basis for classifying participants.

Evidence for the effectiveness of personalized interactions with outgroup members is provided by results of laboratory experiments with artificial ingroup-outgroup categorizations that have been created in the experimental context. In this research paradigm, participants are first divided arbitrarily into two separate social categories based on the ostensive results of some psychological test. Following this ingroup-outgroup category induction, participants from both categories engage in a cooperative team task which is structured so as to minimize or encourage personalized interactions in the course of cooperative contact. Post-interaction evaluations

indicate that those who interacted under more personalized conditions showed significantly less ingroup bias at the end of the contact experience than those who interacted under more impersonal or category-based conditions (Bettencourt et al., 1992; Miller, Brewer & Edwards, 1985).

Recategorization: The Common Ingroup Identity Model

A second model of intergroup contact was also based on the premise that ingroup bias is most difficult to overcome when ingroup-outgroup distinctions are highly salient. The “Common Ingroup Identity Model” (Gaertner et al., 1993) suggests structuring the contact situation so as to focus attention on superordinate category identification that encompasses both ingroup and outgroup in a single social group representation.

According to the Common Ingroup Identity Model, one reason that superordinate goals are effective in reducing intergroup hostility is that they minimize attention to category differences by creating a new inclusive group identity. When such a superordinate category is made salient, group members are more likely to think of themselves as “one unit,” rather than two separate groups.

Original ingroup-outgroup distinctions become less salient when both groups are included in a new ingroup that encompasses previously separate groups. When this form of recategorization is successful, ingroup loyalties and concern for collective welfare are transferred from the original subgroups to the new social category as a whole.

The recategorization model has been tested in a series of experimental studies to assess the conditions under which two previously segregated workgroups can be successfully merged in a superordinate unit. The experimental manipulations in these studies have focused on situational variables that enhance or reduce the perceptual salience of subgroup identities during the combined work team experience. Symbolic features such as group names and colors, or seating patterns that influence proximity and who interacts with whom, have been varied to control relative salience (Gaertner et al., 1989). Consistently, conditions that enhance the salience of the common team identity and reduce the salience of subcategory identities are found to diminish or eliminate ingroup bias in evaluation of fellow team members. To the extent that participants perceive the combined team as a single entity, rather than as an aggregate of two separate groups, evaluations of former outgroup members become more positive (Gaertner et al., 1989; Gaertner et al., 1990).

These two models (decategorization and recategorization) are not mutually exclusive—a common ingroup identity also provides conditions for individuation and personalization of fellow group members. Together these two processes provide a conceptual framework for understanding the qualifying conditions of the contact hypothesis. Cooperation and superordinate goals promote formation of common identity; equal-status, personalized interactions promote decategoriza-

tion and individuation. These models also provide a basis in social psychological theory and research for the melting pot, assimilationist approach to public policy in multiethnic societies.

Failures of Implementation: Science Versus Policy

Given the theoretical and experimental support for the effectiveness of cooperative contact, policy recommendations based on these models seemed well founded. But implementation in real-world settings proved to be a different matter. Reviews of field research on the outcomes of desegregation were mixed, at best (Cook, 1985), and a prevailing belief arose that social scientists were in over their heads when they presumed to recommend that contact was the answer to problems of intergroup conflict and discrimination. As the complexities of intergroup contact in the real world revealed conflict and resistance to cooperative integration, social scientists have had to ask themselves whether failures of implementation reflect inadequate theory or inappropriate policies.

Human Nature and Ethnocentrism

Social psychologists can always legitimately claim that the conditions of contact were rarely “right” (that the qualifications of the contact hypothesis were rarely fully met), but this represents something of an oversimplification of the problems of desegregation. What we have to recognize is that decategorization and common identity—as appealing as these concepts are—are inherently limited in their applicability when we move from the laboratory to real-life situations in which social groups are very large and the context is highly politicized (Rich, Kedem, & Shlesinger, 1995).

One reason for the apparent disjunction between results of laboratory experiments and implementations in the field is that the cognitive theory underlying the two models fails to take into account the functions that differentiated group identities serve in large societal contexts. Social psychology (and liberal philosophy in general) has not given sufficient attention to the fundamental aspects of human nature that give rise to ingroup formation, ingroup attachment and loyalty in the first place. When individuals are willing to fight and die for the sake of preserving group distinctions, we know there must be something more than cognitive representations at stake. Group identification has motivational and functional origins that are deeply rooted in our evolution as a social species.

One account of the motivational underpinnings of social identity is the theory of “optimal distinctiveness” (Brewer, 1991). This model posits that humans are characterized by two opposing needs that govern the relationship between the self-concept and membership in social groups. The first is a need for assimilation and inclusion, a desire for belonging that motivates immersion in social groups. The

second is a need for differentiation from others that operates in opposition to the need for immersion. As group membership becomes more and more inclusive, the need for inclusion is satisfied but the need for differentiation is activated; conversely, as inclusiveness decreases, the need for differentiation is reduced but the need for assimilation is activated. According to the model, the two opposing motives produce an emergent characteristic—the capacity for social identification with distinctive groups that satisfy both needs simultaneously—the need for inclusion/belonging is met within the ingroup, and the need for differentiation by distinctions between ingroup and outgroups. In order to engage member identification and loyalty, groups must have clear rules of inclusion and exclusion.

The process of social identification represents the perceptual, affective, and cognitive mechanisms that support the development and maintenance of group membership and collective behavior. But because successful groups must be exclusive as well as inclusive, the processes that generate social cooperation and sacrifice for the collective welfare within distinctive groups are not extended to those outside the group boundaries. This gives rise to what Campbell (1982) calls “clique selfishness”—where selflessness on behalf of ingroups is matched by the most selfish extremes of greed and hostility when ingroup interests are pitted against those of outgroups. Thus, collective identity also begets ethnocentrism and other manifestations of ingroup bias.

The term “ethnocentrism” was coined by William Graham Sumner in his book *Folkways* (1906). The concept was driven by the observation that human social arrangements are universally characterized by differentiation into ingroups and outgroups—the we-they distinctions that demarcate boundaries of loyalty and cooperation among individuals. Attitudes and values are shaped by this ingroup-outgroup distinction in that individuals view all others from the perspective of the ingroup.

During the 1960s, anthropologist Robert LeVine and social psychologist Donald Campbell undertook an ambitious collaborative effort to test the universality of ethnocentric perception cross-culturally (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). Experienced ethnographers in field sites in Africa, New Guinea, North America, and Asia were commissioned to use their best local informants to obtain information on precolonial ingroup organization and intergroup attitudes, using a structured, open-ended interview format. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses of coded interview responses confirmed the robustness of the tendency to differentiate the social environment in terms of ingroup-outgroup distinctions and to value ingroup characteristics over those of other groups (Brewer, 1972, 1986; Brewer & Campbell, 1976).

While the cross-cultural study of ethnocentrism project of Campbell and LeVine was still underway, Henri Tajfel’s social psychology research group in Bristol, England, was developing a very different paradigm for studying ingroup bias and intergroup discrimination in the laboratory. The experiments that Tajfel

and his colleagues conducted involved the so-called “minimal intergroup situation” (Tajfel, 1970), in which participants were divided into arbitrary social categories in the absence of any shared experience, interdependence, or face-to-face interaction. The results of these experiments demonstrated the powerful effects of mere classification of individuals into distinctive categories to produce ingroup preferences and other symptoms of ethnocentrism.

Remarkably, results of the cross-cultural field research and these laboratory studies converged in confirming the power of we-they distinctions to produce differential evaluation, liking, and treatment of other persons depending on whether they are identified as members of the ingroup category or not. Further, the laboratory experiments with the minimal intergroup situation demonstrated that ingroup loyalty and bias do not necessarily depend on bonds of kinship or extensive shared history among group members, but can apparently be engaged readily by symbolic manipulations that imply shared attributes or common fate. What appears to be critical for ingroup favoritism is that there be a basis for distinctive identification of who is “us” and who is “them”—a rule of exclusion as well as inclusion.

The functional basis for this universal ingroup-outgroup differentiation effect may be its critical role in regulating interpersonal trust. In order to reap the benefits of coordinated, cooperative social living, individuals must be willing to trust that their own cooperation will be matched by others'. But to the extent that cooperation, such as food-sharing, giving aid, etc., involves costs to the self, trust produces a dilemma (Brewer, 1981; Kramer, Brewer & Hanna, 1996). Deciding to trust creates both opportunity and vulnerability. The opportunity lies in the gains that accrue when acts of trust are matched by others. The vulnerability derives from the potential costs of misplaced trust when one person extends cooperation which is exploited by others who do not cooperate in return. The fear of misplaced trust reduces the probability that the benefits of mutual cooperation will be achieved.

The trust dilemma is resolved under conditions of reciprocity, where there is some kind of contingency between our cooperative behavior (tit-for-tat). But reciprocity is an interpersonal solution that requires a history of interactions between two individuals, with opportunity to build up a trust relationship. This form of reciprocity does not readily extrapolate to the multiperson group situation where cooperation between any two specific group members may occur only once in a great while and trust must be extended to the collective as a whole. Common group membership and shared group norms provide the equivalent of reciprocity at the group level. Group punishment of failure to adhere to cooperative obligations toward fellow group members creates a kind of “reciprocity pact” among all members of the group. But this coordination requires mutual recognition of shared membership that can extend only so far across time and space. To accomplish this, group size must be delimited and group boundaries must be sufficiently distinct to differentiate who is in from who is not. Thus, successful intragroup cooperation requires exclusion as well as inclusion.

In effect, shared ingroups represent bounded communities of reciprocal trust and cooperation. Within those boundaries, individuals can legitimately expect to receive (and to give) positive regard, aid, and predictability in the form of adherence to shared social norms and rules—expectations that are not extended to those outside the boundary. Trust within and distrust between is the rule of intergroup behavior (Schopler & Insko, 1992). This differential trust gives credibility to the universal ethnocentric belief syndrome. Within such a bounded system, it is not surprising that we learn to think of ingroups as more virtuous than outgroups. This analysis of the functions served by ingroup-outgroup distinctions provides some basis for understanding the deep resistance that is often manifest in response to intergroup assimilation, integration, or mergers.

The Swing to Pluralism: Some Public Policy Dilemmas

As real-world experience and results of our own research have given us more respect for the importance of ingroup differentiation and identification to individual and societal functioning, many social psychologists have abandoned the promise of assimilation and have advocated an alternative model for regulating intergroup relations in which group differences are made more rather than less salient (Fowers & Richardson, 1996). The idea is that distinct group identities can be complementary and mutually respected, and that positive interdependence among groups can be promoted by capitalizing on their distinctive attributes.

This pluralist model is also derived from social identity theory (Hewstone & Brown, 1986) and has been supported by experimental laboratory research on intergroup contact (e.g., Deschamps & Brown, 1983; Van Oudenhoven, Groenewoud, & Hewstone, 1996). In order to promote positive intergroup attitudes, Hewstone and Brown (1986) recommend that the contact situation be structured so that members of the respective groups have distinct but complementary roles to contribute toward achieving common goals. In this way, both groups can maintain positive distinctiveness within a cooperative framework. In the public policy arena, this model resembles the arguments for multiculturalism and pluralism.

Unfortunately, “multiculturalism” has many different meanings and, just as civic leaders in Dubuque were a bit overzealous in their application of principles of contact and assimilation, policymakers are applying multicultural concepts in ways that may well cause much more harm than good in the long run. The perils appear when multiculturalism is understood to mean the preservation of existing category distinctions which are then transported into legal policies and institutions in ways that require codifying what constitute culture groups and protected cultural practices and heritage, and then institutionalize these as the basis for allocation of political power and resources.

Among the many reasons for concern about pluralistic policies and entitlements of this sort, there are at least five issues that are related to social psychological processes.

First, institutionalizing cultural differences in the political arena reduces opportunities for common group identification and individuation, both of which have repeatedly been demonstrated to reduce ingroup bias and discrimination. Politicized pluralism encourages monolithic perceptions of cultural groups with little room for recognition of within-group individual differences.

Second, such policies of necessity privilege particular lines of differentiation among society members that correspond to ethnic groups (as currently defined). Because of the privileged status implied, other interest groups seek definition as "cultures" (e.g., we now speak of gay culture, of deaf culture, and of gender as culture). Because these are usually ascribed rather than achieved social group memberships, individuals are pigeon-holed by accident of birth into political units. (Cultural identity, like relatives, can't be chosen.)

Third, the codification necessitated by policy formulations reinforces beliefs in natural categories, as though some social group distinctions are primordial and related category differences essentially immutable. Results from recent experiments at Princeton University support this "cultural divide" hypothesis: A disagreement or difference of opinion between two individuals, if attributed to group differences, is perceived as more immutable and unresolvable than the same difference observed in an interpersonal context with no group attribution (Prentice, 1996). In this manifestation, multiculturalism becomes a disguised form of biological determinism.

A fourth issue revolves around who defines what cultural practices are representative of a social group. In the policy arena, it is usually political spokespersons who have a stake in mobilizing group members along particular symbols of cultural identity. By defining and codifying cultural practices as recognized at a particular point in historical time, such policies "freeze" the dynamic process of cultural evolution and change. For individuals and groups, identities naturally expand and contract across different functions and contexts. The fission-fusion model of social group boundaries is long-standing in anthropological theory, and such mutability is implicated by research on how readily individuals adopt context-specific ingroup-outgroup categorizations on the most minimal bases. Correspondingly, cultures have always changed, accommodated, merged, and differentiated over time and as a function of contact. Assimilation is not the problem; cultural hegemony is.

Finally, the belief that sustained positive regard and cooperative interdependence is possible between highly differentiated, monolithic groups is unrealistic. We know too much about "clique selfishness" and the power of social comparison to magnify even small differences in perceived access to resources, power, and control, to expect benign acceptance of differences, or trust in outgroups' intentions or

motives. Reified groups become the fault line for conflict and separatism. Social scientists rejected the separate-but-equal doctrine in the 1950s, and we have no reason to be sanguine about letting it re-emerge now.

A Resolution? Redressing Discrimination Without Reifying Groups

If social psychological research suggests, on the one hand, that group identities have to be acknowledged and respected, and on the other that group identities should not be politically institutionalized, what are the policy implications to be drawn from our discipline? If the assumptions underlying both assimilationism and multiculturalism are equally problematic, does social psychology have anything useful to say to policymakers?

There is an alternative to representing assimilationism and multiculturalism as two extremes along a single bipolar continuum. By taking a different perspective, the insights of recategorization, decategorization, and pluralism can be creatively combined. The key is to capitalize more effectively on our capacity for multiple social identities.

Structurally, societies can be differentiated along many cross-cutting partitions; and individuals have multiple, nonconvergent group memberships and social identities. To the extent that these group divisions are only minimally correlated, shared ingroup memberships and ingroup-outgroup differentiations on one occasion are realigned on others, when alternative identities are salient. If different identifications are meaningful and functional for individuals in different times and places, cross-cutting social categories reduce invidious social comparison, dilute social stereotypes, and motivate conflict prevention (Brewer, 1996; Marcus-Newhall et al., 1993).

Taking advantage of the capacity for multiple group identifications means redefining multiculturalism as a basis for individual identity rather than political policy. All individuals have multicultural heritage, and all of us are capable of juggling multiple identities across a lifetime (Seelye & Wasilewski, 1996). Cultural diversity is something we can experience as individuals, not just as a collective. Consider, for example, two different forms of policy promoting bilingualism. In one form, the differentiation of language communities is acknowledged and reinforced, and public policy requires that education, political participation, and public services be made available in all legally recognized languages so that they are accessible to speakers of either language. In an alternative form, bilingualism means that all members of the society are educated in both languages (or more) so that bilingualism is a shared cultural achievement at the individual, rather than societal, level.

Similar examples can be given for the meaning of multicultural education. Consider the difference between curricula and practices that teach children to think of each other as representatives of distinctly different cultural communities, com-

pared to those that have the goal of teaching children to become experts in more than one culture. The former promotes cultural divisiveness, the latter multiculturalism as a shared value.

Concluding Perspectives

Policymakers don't often think of themselves as dictating social identities, but structural arrangements and legal institutions can greatly influence how identities are defined and whether lines of social differentiation in a society are correlated or uncorrelated. Situations in which social differentiations based on ethnicity, gender, age, religion, occupation, political power, and economic roles are all cross-cutting, require patterns of interdependence and accommodation that promote integration and individual multiculturalism. Situations in which distinctions based on gender, ethnicity, class, and power are convergent set the stage for division along a single societal fault line.

From this perspective, we can advise policymakers that discrimination is still the real issue for intergroup relations. When ingroup bias is permitted to express itself in discriminatory practices in legal, political, and economic arenas, different bases of social identity become progressively more correlated across time. Social policies should be aimed at reducing correlations between social categories and social roles, wealth, and power. We should approach cultural hegemony in much the same way that we respond to business monopolies in the economic arena. Affirmative action policies, for example, can be understood not as group entitlements but as reasoned mechanisms for reducing the historically cumulated correlations between demographic identities and economic and political role identities in our society. Structural changes in the pattern of relationships among social identities is a necessary precondition for achieving the benefits of any capacity for multiculturalism.

It would be naive to assume that social change can be accomplished without coordinated, collective efforts. Social change movements have always depended upon leaders who can mobilize individuals in the name of shared group interests, and group interest politics is both necessary and desirable for democratic societies. What has to be critically examined is the nature of the agenda of the collective movements—whether they are directed toward the larger, long-term interests of the individual members of the group or toward the maintenance of power enclaves.

What we should advocate is not a world in which group distinctions and cultural differences are denied or suppressed, but one in which meaningful social identities are contextualized—where neither accidents of birth nor choices of lifestyle limit access to other social identities; where being black has no more and no less social meaning than being a social psychologist.

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