



Defence Research and  
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pour la défense Canada



# The Psychology of Violent Conflict in Failing States

*A Review of the Scientific Literature*

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The scientific or technical validity of this Contract Report is entirely the responsibility of the Contractor and the contents do not necessarily have the approval or endorsement of Defence R&D Canada.

**Defence R&D Canada**  
Contract Report  
DRDC Toronto CR 2010-186  
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Canada



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## **Defence R&D Canada – Toronto**

Contract Report  
DRDC Toronto CR 2010-186  
December 2010

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## Foreward

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The Adversarial Intent Section (AIS)/DRDC Toronto commissioned this Contract Report in support of the Technology Investment Fund (TIF) Project entitled “A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Strategic Roles and Operational Dynamics” (Project Code: 10ad08). TIF Projects are forward-looking, high-risk – but potentially high-payoff – research endeavours conducted under the auspices of Defence Research & Development Canada (DRDC), the Science and Technology (S&T) agency of the Department of National Defence (DND), Canada.

The aim of this three-year Project is to advance our understanding of:

- The **strategic roles** of ANSAs in the context of violent intergroup conflict; and,
- The **operational dynamics** – that is, the group structures, functions and processes – of ANSAs, in both their internal and external aspects, that facilitate the performance of these roles.

Broadly speaking, we seek to shed some light upon what ANSAs do and why they do it, situating the motivations, intent and behaviours of these groups in the wider context of chronic intergroup conflict.

This Report is the final deliverable of an eight-month contract in which the Contractor was tasked to systematically identify and critically assess scientific literature of relevance to the root causes of violent intergroup conflict perpetrated by ANSAs in fragile and failing states, as part of the Project’s Phase 1 Conceptual Development program of research. This Report will serve to guide our efforts in the next stage – Phase 2 Framework Calibration and Practicum – of the Project’s research program.

## Avant-propos

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La section des intentions antagonistes (SIA) de RDDC Toronto a commandé le présent rapport en appui au projet du Fonds d’investissement technologique (FIT) intitulé « A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Armed Non-state Actors (ANSAs): Strategic Roles and Operational Dynamics » (code de projet : 10ad08). Les projets FIT sont des projets de recherche avant-gardistes, très risqués – mais potentiellement très rentables – dirigés sous les auspices de Recherche et développement pour la défense Canada (RDDC), l’agence de science et de technologie (S et T) du ministère de la Défense nationale (MDN) du Canada.

Ce projet d’une durée de trois années vise à accroître notre connaissance des aspects suivants :

- Les **rôles stratégiques** des acteurs armés non étatiques (AANE) dans le contexte des conflits intergroupes violents;

- La **dynamique opérationnelle** – soit les structures, les fonctions et les processus des groupes – des AANE à la fois dans leurs aspects internes et externes, qui facilitent l'exécution de ces rôles.

En termes généraux, nous cherchons à jeter la lumière sur ce que les AANE font, pourquoi et comment ils le font, en présentant les motivations, les intentions et les comportements de ces groupes dans le contexte plus large des conflits sociaux chroniques.

Le présent rapport est le livrable final aux termes d'un contrat de huit mois, dans le cadre de la phase 1 du projet Développement conceptuel – programme de recherche, au cours duquel l'entrepreneur devait systématiquement repérer et évaluer, de façon éclairée, les publications scientifiques pertinentes portant sur les causes fondamentales des conflits intergroupes violents déclenchés par des acteurs non étatiques armés (ANEAs) au sein d'états fragiles et en déroute. Le présent rapport guidera notre travail au cours de l'étape suivante – Phase 2, Calibrage du cadre conceptuel et exercice pratique – du programme de recherche.

## Abstract

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The Adversarial Intent Section of Defence Research and Development Canada – Toronto (DRDC Toronto) has been tasked with gaining a better understanding of the root causes of violent conflict perpetrated by armed non-state actors (ANSAs) in fragile and failing states. For this, DRDC Toronto has contracted two leading social psychologists in the field of intergroup relations who, together with their teams, have conducted an integrative review of the literature. The present report presents the results of this literature review, which is organized around six major social psychological theories that outline factors precipitating the development of conflict, factors maintaining conflict, and factors leading to stability. Recommendations intended to guide further research are provided, emphasizing perceptions of relative deprivation, group-based emotions, group identity, and collective narratives.

## Résumé

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La section de l'intention de l'adversaire (IA) de Recherche et développement pour la défense Canada – Toronto (RDDC Toronto) avait pour objectif de mieux comprendre les causes fondamentales des conflits violents déclenchés par les ANEA au sein d'états fragiles et en déroute. À cette fin, RDDC Toronto a conclu un marché avec deux psychosociologues éminents dans le domaine des relations intergroupes, lesquels ont procédé à une analyse documentaire intégrative, en collaboration avec leurs équipes. Ce rapport présente les résultats de cette analyse documentaire, qui s'articule autour de six théories psychosociales importantes décrivant les causes déterminantes, les facteurs d'entretien et les facteurs de maîtrise des conflits. On y trouve des recommandations visant à orienter d'autres recherches sur les perceptions de la privation relative, l'état émotionnel au sein des groupes, l'identité collective et les récits collectifs.

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## Executive summary

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### **The Psychology of Violent Conflict in Failing States: A Review of the Scientific Literature**

**Donald M. Taylor; Michael J. A. Wohl; Michael King; Persia Etemadi; DRDC Toronto CR 2010-186; Defence R&D Canada – Toronto.**

Increasingly, Western military forces are likely to confront irregular opponents, whereby groups engaging in violence are composed of armed non-state actors (ANSAs), and this in regional settings where the local government is weak or absent. Thus, for better prevention, monitoring, and intervention, Western military forces need to understand why non-state actors resort to violence, and identify which factors specific to failed or failing states contribute to the emergence of violent conflict.

The Adversarial Intent Section of Defence Research and Development Canada – Toronto (DRDC Toronto) has been tasked with gaining a deeper understanding of how conflicts in failing states emerge. For this, DRDC Toronto has contracted two leading social psychologists in the field of intergroup relations – Taylor and Wohl – who, together with their teams, have conducted an integrative literature review (ILR) of the literature pertinent to violent conflict in failing states.

The present report outlines the results of this literature review, which is organized around six major social psychological theories concerning intergroup conflict. Reviewed first are two early social-psychological theories of conflict: realistic conflict theory and relative deprivation theory. Realistic conflict theory offers a structural approach to conflict, which centers on group competition for resources; relative deprivation theory, conversely, focuses on perceptions of fairness and injustice as a result of resource distribution. Following this, an alternative approach to understanding conflict is considered by analyzing the social psychological factors that contribute to social stability. Specifically, the theories of social dominance and system justification are discussed, informing the study of conflict by describing the factors that keep it at bay, even in situations where conflict might be expected. Lastly, the themes of group-based identity and group-based emotions are discussed, both considered throughout this review as providing the most promising insights regarding violent conflict. Thus, several theories centered on social identity and intergroup emotions are examined in detail.

Based on this extensive review of social psychological explanations of violent conflict, the most promising avenues of research are identified for DRDC Toronto to pursue in their future endeavours to understand ANSAs wherever the Canadian Forces (CF) might need to operate. These research recommendations include (1) perceptions of relative deprivation, specifically how group comparisons contribute to the development of violent conflict, (2) group-based emotions, specifically how angst and hate facilitate conflict, (3) group identity, specifically how the clarity of group identities may motivate individuals to join extremist movements, and (4) collective narratives, specifically how stories about one's group are used to justify violence against another group.

## Sommaire

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### **Psychologie des conflits violents au sein d'états en déroute: Analyse de publications scientifiques**

**Donald M. Taylor; Michael J. A. Wohl; Michael King; Persia Etemadi; RDDC Toronto CR 2010-186; R & D pour la défense Canada – Toronto.**

Les forces armées occidentales sont de plus en plus susceptibles d'affronter des opposants irréguliers; les groupes ayant des comportements violents sont formés d'acteurs non étatiques armés (ANEA) et sévissent dans des régions où le gouvernement est faible ou absent. Ainsi, pour appliquer des mesures de prévention, de contrôle et d'intervention plus efficaces, les forces armées occidentales doivent comprendre pourquoi les acteurs non étatiques ont recours à la violence, de même que déterminer les facteurs propres aux états en déroute ou défaillants qui favorisent l'émergence de conflits violents.

La section de l'intention de l'adversaire (IA) de Recherche et développement pour la défense Canada – Toronto (RDDC Toronto) avait pour objectif de mieux comprendre l'émergence des conflits au sein des états en déroute. À cette fin, RDDC Toronto a conclu un marché avec deux psychosociologues éminents dans le domaine des relations intergroupes – Taylor et Wohl – qui ont procédé, en collaboration avec leurs équipes, à une analyse documentaire intégrative des publications portant sur les conflits violents au sein d'états en déroute.

Le présent rapport fait état des résultats de cette analyse documentaire, qui s'articule autour de six théories psychosociales importantes relatives aux conflits intergroupes. On a d'abord analysé deux théories psychosociales primaires sur les conflits, soit la théorie des conflits réalistes et la théorie de la privation relative. La théorie des conflits réalistes est fondée sur une approche structurelle vis-à-vis des conflits qui porte essentiellement sur la rivalité entre les groupes pour l'obtention de ressources, alors que la théorie de la privation relative est centrée sur la perception de l'équité et de l'injustice résultant de la répartition des ressources. On a ensuite tenu compte d'une autre approche visant à comprendre les conflits par le biais d'une analyse des facteurs psychosociaux favorisant la stabilité sociale. Cette analyse documentaire porte plus particulièrement sur les théories de la domination sociale et de la justification du système inspirant l'étude des conflits par le biais d'une description des facteurs qui permettent de les tenir à distance, même lorsque les conflits sont imminents. Enfin, cette analyse documentaire traite de deux thèmes importants, soit l'état émotionnel au sein des groupes et l'identité collective, lesquels favorisent, d'après l'analyse, une compréhension plus intuitive des conflits violents. Par conséquent, plusieurs théories portant sur l'identité sociale et les émotions intergroupes y sont examinées de façon approfondie.

Cette analyse complète des facteurs psychosociaux expliquant les conflits violents a permis de révéler à RDDC Toronto les possibilités les plus prometteuses en matière de recherche, permettant ainsi à ce centre de continuer à utiliser toute son expertise pour comprendre les ANEA partout où les Forces canadiennes (FC) pourraient être déployées. Parmi les recommandations en matière de recherche, on compte (1) la perception de la privation relative, plus précisément la façon dont les comparaisons de groupes favorisent le développement de conflits violents, (2) l'état émotionnel au sein des groupes, plus précisément la façon dont l'angoisse et la haine

favorisent le développement de conflits, (3) l'identité collective, plus précisément la façon dont la clarté de l'identité collective peut encourager des personnes à adhérer à des mouvements extrémistes et (4) les récits collectifs, plus précisément la façon dont les récits sur un groupe sont utilisés pour justifier les conflits violents à l'égard d'un autre groupe.

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# Table of contents

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Foreward/Avant-propos .....	i
Abstract/Résumé .....	iii
Executive summary .....	v
Sommaire .....	vi
Table of contents .....	ix
List of figures .....	xii
List of tables .....	xiii
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations.....	1
1.3 Methodology .....	2
1.4 Challenges .....	3
1.5 Structure of the Review.....	3
2 Resource-Based Conflicts: Competition and Perceptions of Their Distribution.....	4
2.1 Realistic Conflict Theory .....	4
2.1.1 Introduction.....	4
2.1.2 Scientific Endorsement of RCT: The Camp Experiments .....	4
2.1.3 Support and Applications.....	5
2.1.4 Criticisms and Limitations .....	6
2.1.5 Extensions and Developments .....	7
2.1.6 Conclusion .....	9
2.2 Relative Deprivation Theory .....	11
2.2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2.2 Preconditions.....	12
2.2.3 Personal/Group Distinction.....	12
2.2.4 Cognitive/Affective Distinction .....	13
2.2.5 Group Relative Deprivation and Collective Action .....	13
2.2.6 Temporal Relative Deprivation.....	14
2.2.7 Future Directions and Limitations.....	14
2.2.8 Conclusion .....	16
3 Legitimizing the Social System: Psychological Factors Contributing to Stability .....	17
3.1 Introduction .....	17
3.2 Social Dominance Theory .....	17
3.2.1 Overview of the Theory .....	17
3.2.2 Summary of the Theory .....	20
3.2.3 Criticisms and Limitations .....	21
3.3 System Justification Theory .....	22

3.3.1	Overview of the Theory .....	22
3.3.2	The Role of Stereotypes .....	22
3.3.3	How System Justification Maintains Social Harmony.....	23
3.3.4	Keeping Disadvantaged Groups Disadvantaged .....	24
3.3.5	Criticisms and Limitations .....	25
4	Identity and Emotion: Psychological Factors Contributing to Conflict.....	27
4.1	The Social Identity Approach.....	27
4.1.1	Introduction .....	27
4.1.2	Social Categorization and Minimal Group Experiments .....	28
4.1.3	Specifications of the Theory: Strategies for Positive Social Identity and the Potential for Conflict.....	28
4.1.4	When Does a Group Challenge Another? The Route to Collective Action....	31
4.1.5	Theoretical Derivatives of SIT.....	33
4.1.5.1	Self-Categorization Theory.....	33
4.1.5.2	The Five-Stage Model of Intergroup Relations .....	33
4.1.5.3	A Theory of Self: The Primacy of Cultural Identity.....	35
4.1.6	Motives Associated with Social Identities .....	38
4.1.6.1	Self-Esteem.....	38
4.1.6.2	Distinctiveness .....	39
4.1.6.3	Uncertainty Reduction .....	40
4.1.7	Criticisms and Limitations .....	40
4.1.8	Conclusion .....	42
4.2	Group-Based Emotions .....	42
4.2.1	Economic Understandings .....	43
4.2.2	Social Cognition, Domain-Specific Emotions, and Decision Making.....	43
4.2.3	Terror Management, Worldview Defence, and Violence .....	45
4.2.4	Intergroup Emotions.....	46
4.2.4.1	Integrated Threat Theory .....	48
4.2.4.2	Intergroup Emotion Theory .....	49
4.2.4.3	Aggression Relevant Emotions.....	52
5	Understanding ANSAs in Failing States: Research Recommendations .....	60
5.1	Overview .....	60
5.2	Relative Deprivation.....	60
5.3	Group Emotions .....	61
5.4	Group Identity .....	62
5.4.1	Structure of Group Identity .....	62
5.4.2	Collective Narratives.....	63
5.5	Contexts and Typologies .....	64
5.6	Conclusion.....	64
	References .....	66

List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms .....	86
Distribution list .....	87

## List of figures

---

Figure 1: Scores of psychological scales among participants who chose to be insurgents and non-insurgents .....	20
Figure 2: Schematic representation of Social Identity Theory .....	30
Figure 3: Five-Stage Model (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984) .....	35
Figure 4: Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer, 1991) .....	39
Figure 5: Intergroup Emotions Theory (Smith, 1993).....	50
Figure 6: Identity and collective angst as factors leading to outgroup aggression .....	59



## List of tables

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Table 1: Psychological factors contributing to violent conflict..... 60

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Background

A state is said to be failing when its capacity to govern effectively is eroded, resulting in a collapse of state power and function. In other words, a failing state is characterized by political instability. This context is a breeding ground for conflict – at the very least, this is a common assumption. Within this context, the pathway to conflict is complex – it involves an interaction of social factors, including those that contribute to state failure, and the psychological variables that form the subjective lens through which individuals view the world.

For better prevention, monitoring, and intervention, Western security forces need to understand how these conflicts arise, and identify which factors specific to failed states truly contribute to the emergence of conflict. Indeed, as the Cold War recedes into history, Western militaries are more likely to get involved in asymmetrical, insurgency-type conflicts as opposed to “conventional” wars of opposing state armies. As British General Sir Rupert Smith has argued, Western armies are now most likely to be engaged in “war[s] among the people”. Henceforth, throughout this report, the people who actively partake in these conflicts are referred to as *armed non-state actors* (ANSAs). More specifically, ANSAs make up “an autonomously operating planned group that has the capacity to use violence to achieve political ends” (see Box 1, next page). Western countries are adapting their militaries for violent conflicts where ANSAs are the main adversaries, with a growing recognition that “victory” might largely depend on strategies other than military force (Smith, 2005).

The Adversarial Intent Section of Defence Research and Development Canada – Toronto (DRDC Toronto) has been tasked with gaining a deeper understanding of how these conflicts in failing states emerge. For this, DRDC Toronto has contracted two leading social psychologists in the field of intergroup relations – Taylor and Wohl – who, together with their teams, have conducted a review of the literature pertinent to the issue of conflict in failing states. The current report is the product of this literature review.

## 1.2 The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations

The objective of the present literature review is to support DRDC Toronto’s future research program concerning ANSAs. Although this literature review crosses multiple disciplines, such as political science, international relations, sociology, anthropology, and war studies, the main focus of this review is on social-psychological research related to conflict. More specifically, the review has drawn heavily upon the field of intergroup relations, which focuses on the attitudes, beliefs, motivations and emotions associated with group membership in a variety of intergroup contexts, from cooperation between groups to outright conflict.

The field of intergroup relations, a sub-field of social psychology, is well positioned to inform about the emergence of conflict in general, and violence in failing states more specifically. The social psychology of intergroup relations, until the nineteen seventies, was dominated by rigorous methodologies applied to conflicts between groups of equal status and power. Beginning in the early seventies attention shifted, with the same scientific rigour, to conflicts involving groups of unequal status. This new focus, coupled with an explosion in new theorizing, has meant that current theory and research in the social psychology of intergroup relations is especially relevant to the study of ANSAs.

### Box 1. What is an Armed Non-state Actor?

Throughout this Report, the term ANSA refers to:

“An autonomously operating planned group that has the capacity to use violence to achieve political ends.”

Four attributes distinguish an ANSA from other armed groups that operate in the contemporary battlespace:

- *Autonomously operating.* ANSAs are not agents or proxies of a state, though a state may have been instrumental in their inception. They retain the capacity for independent decision making.
- *Planned group.* ANSAs are deliberately formed by their members or an external authority. This excludes groups that come together spontaneously to act without prior arrangement, such as demonstrations, riots, etc.
- *The capacity to use violence.* ANSAs have the motivation, intent, ways and means for the direct or indirect use of force to inflict physical and/or psychological injury to persons or material damage to property. Note, however, the use of the term ‘capacity’. Violence is not necessarily the exclusive nor favoured strategy to achieve the group’s ends in any and all circumstances. Nevertheless, it is available as one arrow within the strategic quiver of the group.
- *To achieve political ends.* ANSAs engage in a contest for power with governments and/or other non-state actors, both armed and unarmed, in the pursuit of political objectives. Their practical political agendas are as varied as the groups themselves, and run the gamut from revolutionary socio-political change to territorial secession. Unlike criminal organizations, though, their primary motivation is not personal material gain.

For a detailed discussion of this definition, see Moore et al. 2010.

As with any field of research, intergroup relations has its share of technical terms that permeate its discussions. Foremost among these are two terms: *ingroup*, which refers to a social category in which an individual feels membership, and *outgroup*, which refers to a social category whereby an individual does not consider the self as a member. At the centre of this distinction is the notion that part of a person’s sense of self is derived from his or her membership in social groups. Because of this psychological bond to the ingroup, people tend to act and feel more positively towards ingroup members than outgroup members. Importantly, a person may feel like - and indeed be - a member of many different groups, including gender (male or female), citizenship (e.g., Canadian), employment (e.g., a government worker), political affiliation (e.g., a liberal or conservative), or religion (e.g., Hindu or Christian). Each ingroup exerts particular influences on their members’ behaviour. Yet at a more basic level, the mere awareness of being a member of a group, whatever that group may be, influences behaviour. Most of the social psychological research conducted on intergroup relations examines these basic consequences of being an ingroup member, and how it affects behaviour towards outgroups. In the present report, not all behaviours towards outgroups are reviewed. More specifically, for the purposes of better understanding ANSAs, the review has focused on behaviours towards outgroups that involve prejudice, intolerance, violence, and conflict.

### 1.3 Methodology

The following literature review was based on information collected from four main sources:

1. *Systematic literature search.* The literature review focused heavily on scientific literature, and consisted of a rigorous systematic retrieval of relevant studies and reviews from leading journals in the fields of psychology, social psychology, sociology, political science, conflict and terrorism studies. Reports from think-tanks and governments were also considered.

2. *Critical assessment of the literature.* Based on their research expertise, the project's lead researchers were able to revisit the literature, analyze its pertinence, applicability and shortcomings, and establish key research recommendations.
3. *Research contributions by team members.* As unique contributions to this review, the lead researchers included relevant unpublished data obtained through their own research on violent conflict.
4. *Consultations with leading experts in the field of violent conflict and terrorism.* Information and theoretical insights were generated through interviews with recognized experts on conflict and terrorism.

## 1.4 Challenges

The challenges of reviewing the literature on ANSAs and the roots of violent conflict in failing states are numerous. First and foremost, the literature is fragmented across disciplines and sub-disciplines. Perhaps more importantly, within disciplines that do purportedly focus on conflict, research with ANSAs is rare and violence in the context of failing states is not commonly examined. Although some studies directly related to ANSAs and failing states are discussed in this report, the majority of the research reviewed is conducted on different populations, in different environments. Faced with this apparent disparity, it must be remembered that many human processes described in psychological research are thought to be universal; young adults responding to authority in North America, for example, probably reflect how young adults respond to authority in Pakistan. This is not to minimize, however, the influence of cultural factors and the impact of a conflict-ridden environment. During this literature review, the situational factors specific to ANSAs have been taken into consideration, and whenever these situational factors were thought to limit the generalizability of research findings, appropriate caveats were added in the discussion. Despite these challenges and caveats, it is hoped that the following review captures the most applicable insights offered by social scientists who have researched conflict.

## 1.5 Structure of the Review

In the following literature review, six major theories are examined, each potentially offering insights into the psychology and behavior of ANSAs in failing states. These theories are sorted into three sections. The first section describes two early social-psychological theories of conflict: realistic conflict theory, and relative deprivation theory. Realistic Conflict Theory offers a structural approach to conflict, which centers on group competition for resources; Relative Deprivation Theory, conversely, focuses on perceptions of fairness and injustice as a result of resource distribution. In the second section, an alternative approach to understanding conflict is considered by analyzing the social psychological factors that contribute to social stability. Specifically, the theories of social dominance and system justification inform the study of conflict by describing the factors that keep it at bay, even in situations where conflict might be expected. The third section presents the culmination of our literature review, and explores the impactful roles of identity and emotion in precipitating conflict. In the fourth section, recommendations are offered, based on the most promising avenues of research currently underway in social psychology, for DRDC Toronto to pursue in their future endeavors to understand ANSAs wherever the Canadian Forces (CF) might need to operate.

## **2 Resource-Based Conflicts: Competition and Perceptions of Their Distribution**

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### **2.1 Realistic Conflict Theory**

#### **2.1.1 Introduction**

As many material resources become increasingly scarce, conflicts erupt over who owns what, and how to secure what is left. Indeed, conflicts over land, water, oil, diamonds, minerals, ivory, and gas are evident throughout history. For instance, water, in short supply throughout much of the world (Vörösmarty et al., 2000), is at the centre of violent disputes in Nigeria and Afghanistan, and is also thought to be a major factor in the Tibet/China conflict (Gleick, 2008). Competition over other resources, even those which are copious, is closely linked with several recent wars and periods of intense conflict in Africa. For example, in Sierra Leone, a destructive and bloody, decade-long civil war has been fought in which corrupt state actors and a warlord-led insurgency competed for control over diamonds and the wealth they generate (Silberfein, 2004). Material resources are not the only source of conflict. Many battles have also been waged over symbolic resources. Conflicts over rights, control, or status, for example, may be intertwined with aspirations for material resources, or sought in their own right.

The premise that interest in material or symbolic resources fuels conflict is at the core of one of the earliest, and still influential, social psychological theories of intergroup conflict: Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) (e.g., Sherif, 1966; LeVine & Campbell, 1972). RCT proposes that intergroup behaviour, namely conflict and hostility towards other groups, arises as a result of competition over scarce or limited resources. It is important to underscore that for a psychological theory, RCT does not attribute psychological origins, such as attitudes or emotions, to intergroup behaviour. Rather, actions towards an outgroup arise from material (or symbolic) interests. It is the functional relations, such as matters concerning material objects, conditions, and goals, which determine behaviour (often violent) toward the outgroup. RCT shares with other economic theories the assumption that humans act selfishly, i.e., people act to benefit themselves and their social group (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). While conflicting goals elicit group competition, common goals can subvert it: “The real or imagined compatibility or incompatibility between one group’s attainment of goal objects and the designs of other people arouses moves to pull together with those other people or to pull away from them, to help or hinder them” (Sherif, 1966, p. 3).

#### **2.1.2 Scientific Endorsement of RCT: The Camp Experiments**

Although the notion that competition for resources could trigger violent conflict was not new, RCT gained prominence in the social sciences based on a series of experiments conducted in summer camps. Now viewed as classics, these camp experiments were conducted between 1949 and 1954, with healthy 11- and 12-year-old boys, who were led to believe that they were at a normal summer camp. Once separated into two isolated groups, the intergroup relations displayed by the young boys provide striking evidence of the power of structural conditions to shape behaviour. Among the various goals of the camp experiments, the researchers tested two main hypotheses that form the basic tenets of RCT. The first hypothesis was that competition for resources between groups will generate hostility towards the outgroup and produce negative biases, such as stereotypes. The second hypothesis concerned superordinate goals, whereby goals which appeal to both groups but which neither group can achieve on its own, will lead to cooperation between the groups, and result in a reduction of intergroup conflict and hostility.

Each camp group was made to carry out numerous team-building tasks such as cooking, and gradually displayed the characteristics of a cohesive group, including group norms and hierarchies. After the groups were made aware of each other through the creation of a tournament, competition between the groups soon became hostile: intergroup attitudes became extreme, with each group ardently supporting its own team in tournament games, while disparaging the other. This competition between the groups encouraged the formation of ingroup solidarity, cooperation within groups, and ingroup friendship, while amplifying outgroup hostility, name calling, and almost uncontrollable intergroup fighting. Likewise, the campers consistently overestimated the performance of their team on a variety of tasks, while underestimating the performance of their rivals.

Eventually, superordinate goals – defined as those which have “a compelling appeal for members of each group, but that neither group can achieve without participation of the other” (Sherif, 1966, p. 89) – were introduced as a means to shift the relations between the two groups from intense hostility to one that was friendly and cooperative. Several scenarios were staged which elicited the creation of such a goal: campers had to work together to cope with the breakdown of a water supply in one scenario, and start a stalled truck that was to provide them with food in another. Although the hostilities did not immediately end, a gradual and eventual shift towards friendlier relations was observed, and carried on for the remainder of the camp period.

### 2.1.3 Support and Applications

Although RCT has since received little theoretical attention in social psychology, the theory remains influential by its application in other fields of research. Empirical support for RCT can be found within the fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology, among others (see review by Jackson, 1993), often from ethnographic field studies. The theory provides a valuable, albeit self-evident, perspective on many existing conflicts: material resources, if not at the root of much international and civil strife, are at least influential factors.

Several lines of research share a similar approach to RCT, focusing on human behaviour as rational, and motivated by self-interest. One example is gaming research, which studies human behaviour in controlled experimental settings. From a gaming research standpoint, “conflicts are assumed to evolve when incompatible interests are perceived by the parties involved as being more important than compatible interests” (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, p. 45). Among findings from gaming research, people have been shown to be more competitive in *intergroup*, rather than *interindividual* gaming experiments (see Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). As gaming research often extrapolates from an interpersonal level, however, caution must be exercised in applying its findings to the understanding of larger-scale social conflict and peace.

In accordance with the theory’s main postulates, a vast amount of research in the domains of economics, political science, and ecology, among others, studies the effects of both abundance and scarcity of natural resources on conflict. Findings in this area are often divergent, however, and portray a complex, if not puzzling picture of the relationship between resources and conflict. One line of research provides evidence of a causal relationship between the increasing scarcity of natural resources and conflict, namely in the developing world. In this view, a scarcity of environmental resources, specifically the depletion and degradation of renewable resources, interacts with other contextual factors to increase the risk of conflict. According to Homer-Dixon (2001), “this environmental scarcity helps generate chronic, diffuse, subnational violence – exactly the kind of violence that bedevils conventional military institutions” (p. 13). However, this hypothesis and some of its underlying assumptions have been challenged (e.g., Hartmann,

2001; Theisen, 2008). For example, at least one study has found that internal armed conflict is more strongly associated with poverty and instability rather than with the specific scarcity of natural resources (Theisen, 2008).

Another prevalent – yet contrary – view suggests that an *abundance* of resources increases the risk of conflict, a perspective sometimes referred to as the “resource curse”. An influential paper by Collier and Hoeffler (2004) provides evidence of this counterintuitive hypothesis. In this study, two competing models of conflict were tested, using a global data set from large-scale civil conflict spanning from 1960 to 1999. One model, referred to as the ‘grievance’ model, centered on the existence of objective grievances such as inequality, ethnic hatred, or political repression; the other model focused on structural conditions favouring conflict, namely the existence of financing sources for rebellions, and is referred to as the ‘greed’ model. Although the results do not allow for a complete rejection of the ‘grievance’ model, the study found much stronger support for the “greed” model of conflict risk. Specifically, countries richer in resources, relatively low in growth rate of per capita income, and dependent on primary commodity exports, were found to be at a higher risk for conflict. As well, funds from the appropriation of resources, such as from diamonds in Sierra Leone and drugs in Colombia, were often quoted as significant sources of financing for rebel organizations. Collier (2006) has argued that war will occur “when rebellions happen to be financially viable” (p. 14) and not due to objective measures of grievance. This view has been termed the “new political economy of war” and has been applied from many disciplines to so-called “resource conflicts” in which insurgencies profit from war (Ukiwo, 2007).

Still, even the “resource curse” hypothesis and related economic theories of conflict – as well as the statistical analyses used to provide support for them – have been called into question. Results from empirical studies have been mixed. Some studies found that resource abundance was associated with a *decrease* in the risk for onset of war (e.g., Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2009). Furthermore, rather than indicating that resource dependence predicted civil war, results pointed towards a reverse causal relationship: conflict led societies to become more dependent on natural resources. Others continue to promulgate the grievance view of conflict (see relative deprivation theory, Section 2.2). This is a debate that will likely continue for some time.

#### **2.1.4 Criticisms and Limitations**

Realistic Conflict Theory is “deceptively simple, intuitively convincing, and has received strong empirical support” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 7). Despite this, the original formulation of the theory invariably has several limitations. Criticisms stem from concern about how the theory and its conception of conflict applies to real world group issues and dynamics (see Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Although the camp experiments were exceptional in managing to successfully balance stringent methodology with convincing realism, applying findings from any controlled experiment to real conflict is problematic. Can arguments over points in a game be equated to “a life-and-death struggle between nations” (p. 55)? What do the results of this experimentally generated “conflict” with preteen boys contribute to a real world that encompasses complex politics, ideologies, and multiple parties and players?

Conflict comes in many forms and is carried out for multiple reasons. Despite this, RCT and other structural approaches to conflict appear to suggest that all conflict is bad. The assumption that cooperation is rational, and that irrational thinking and errors in judgment lead to war is manifest in gaming research, where conflict negatively impacts both parties. Yet conflict can sometimes be constructive, especially from the perspective of disadvantaged groups, or in situations where social change is necessary. It might be one of the only options available to redress injustices, demand a fair share of resources, or achieve any degree of empowerment: “To label such conflict



'harmful' and to show a bias for peace and harmony in such a situation might strengthen the position of the advantaged group and thus allow the exploitation to continue" (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, p. 57). In other words, ANSAs are unlikely to act merely to gain resources – stemming from a rational evaluation of the ingroup's portion relative to an outgroup's portion. Instead, ANSAs might act for, among other reasons, the desire to redress perceived injustices.

The apparent neglect for the needs of minority and disadvantaged groups in RCT is also manifest in the theory's restricted portrayal of groups. The camp experiments used groups of equal power, a depiction that is at odds with the prevalence of inequality in the real world, as well as with most cases of modern warfare: asymmetric warfare, especially in scenarios involving non-state actors, seems to be the norm, not the exception. The theory leaves several concerns regarding the variability of groups and group dynamics unaddressed. What factors influence whether or not members of a minority will enter into conflict with a majority? How does inequality *within* groups affect group behaviour, such as when non-state actors battle amongst themselves? Furthermore, groups may be open (i.e., members are able to leave one group and join another) or closed. RCT does not specify predictions for these cases. In addition to neglecting these group characteristics, the theory also fails to address the presence of third-party influences (Billig, 1976).

Finally, in implicating material or symbolic factors as primarily determining conflict, RCT must be viewed as containing the inherent assumption that intergroup behaviour is consistent and reasoned. Although psychological solutions for conflict, in the form of superordinate goals, are provided, the origins of intergroup behaviour are conceptualized only in objective terms. Psychological factors, such as those concerning perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and identity, are viewed as irrelevant. Although these points will be reviewed in later sections, it is important to note that, at present, incorporating realistic conflict theory as part of an understanding of social conflict is constrained by this emphasis on rational behaviour. Alternative perspectives in the social psychology of intergroup behaviour can provide much needed insight and elaborations on the theory.

### **2.1.5 Extensions and Developments**

One of the legacies of RCT is that it clearly illustrated the practical value of superordinate goals. Both American and Soviet politicians, for example, have been accused of profiting from the Cold War by uniting their respective countries against a common enemy. More recently, the war in Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror have been criticized as strategies to "divert the public from economic decline at home" (Shivani, 2001). Indeed, superordinate goals as a means to reduce conflict have been applied throughout history in many different contexts, and have generally been successful (Jackson, 1993).

While the original theory predicted that the existence of a superordinate goal would lead to cooperation and relative harmony between groups, it did not specify the processes involved in this transformation. Taylor and Moghaddam (1994) suggested that individuals might have shifted to viewing one large, overriding group, instead of two distinct groups. Indeed, research (e.g., Brown & Wade, 1987; Gaertner et al., 2000) indicates that superordinate goals reduce conflict because of their psychological effects on group members' cognitive representations of their groups. In other words, it may be the change in perceptions, not the change in material conditions that promote cooperation. Key to understanding this process is the concept of group identity. One study shows that groups cooperating on a task were friendliest with each other when each group had a clearly defined role (Brown & Wade, 1987). Thus, superordinate goals worked best to reduce hostility when each group was able to maintain its distinct group identity.

In line with this, Gaertner et al. (2000) consider the collaborative effects of superordinate goals as being due to identity processes, as theorized by Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT) (Pettigrew, 1998; originally proposed by Allport, 1954). ICT specifies the conditions necessary to achieve harmonious intergroup relations. Pettigrew's reworking of the theory (1998) hypothesizes that decategorization, mutual differentiation, and recategorization –in that sequence– can reduce prejudice towards an outgroup over time, and can generalize to other situations and groups.

In the process of decategorization, individuals shift towards interacting on a personal basis, rather than a group basis. In the recategorization stage, categorization occurs at a higher level, comprising both groups involved. In the mutual differentiation process, group members come to respectfully emphasize their distinctiveness while maintaining cooperative interdependence. These three processes are ascribed to the original descriptions of the camp experiments, as underlying the change in group relations resulting from the introduction of a superordinate goal; they are also supported by empirical studies (see Gaertner et. al, 2000). Furthermore, this analysis frames the effects of superordinate goals in terms of shifts in the identities of group members. In this sense, the mutual differentiation process is characterized by the peaceful maintenance of dual identities (that of both the common group and subgroup), while the recategorization stage features the achievement of a shared group identity. When a process of decategorization occurs, personal identity is emphasized, and group identities are subdued.

Although superordinate goals appear to be useful, the concept has limitations. Billig (1976) cautions that in most cases, the existence of common goals and mutual cooperation will not eradicate any power differences between two groups: thus, the power relations between and within groups must be taken into consideration. Indeed, the concept of superordinate goals might only be effective with groups of equal or similar power. Moreover, the power of any intervening third-party must also be taken into consideration.

In addition to the study of superordinate goals, other postulates of RCT have received recent empirical support. Several studies (e.g., Esses et al., 1998; Zarate et al., 2004; Sassenberg et al., 2007) indicate that perceived competition for resources can explain prejudice, especially towards immigrants and minorities. Importantly, these studies measure *perceptions* of competition, rather than any objective appraisal of conflicting goals. Esses, Jackson, and Armstrong (1998) introduced the term “perceived realistic conflict theory” to emphasize that actual competition is not necessary to elicit a perceived threat from another group; rather, it is the *perception* of competition or scarcity of resources that leads to outgroup hostility. In one study, a perceived threat to economic well-being was shown to increase prejudice towards immigrants (Zarate et al., 2004). In a separate series of experiments (Sassenberg et al., 2007), white participants who were asked to think about a situation involving competition with a person, regardless of that person's race, displayed higher prejudice towards African Americans. East Germans, after participating in an experimentally controlled competition with other East Germans, displayed prejudice towards both West Germans and Muslims.

Influenced by Realistic Conflict Theory, Esses, Jackson and Armstrong (1998) proposed an instrumental model of group conflict. Perceived competition for materials (real or symbolic) is referred to as “resource stress”, defined as “any perception that, within a society, access to resources may be limited for certain groups” (p. 702). Resource stress may be influenced by real events (e.g., an economic depression), an unequal distribution of resources, or the *desire* for unequal distribution of resources, based on a belief that resources are scarce and thus some groups will get none. In this model, resource stress, combined with the salience of potentially competitive outgroups, produces perceived group competition for resources.

Certain characteristics determine which outgroups are likely to be perceived as competitors: according to the model, perceived competitors tend to be groups that are salient, distinct from one's own group, yet have shared interests – therefore motivated to acquire desired resources. The model includes cognitive and affective aspects associated with this perception. The cognitive aspect is a “zero-sum” belief that resources are finite; the more one group takes, the less there is for the other. Individuals are also hypothesized to experience emotions, such as anxiety and fear. The model predicts that individuals will then strive to remove the source of competition through a variety of strategies. They may:

1. Express derogatory or negative attitudes or behaviour (discrimination/prejudice) towards the outgroup in an attempt to decrease the competitiveness of the outgroup;
2. Increase the competitiveness of their own group by improving skills, boosting confidence, etc.;
3. Avoid the outgroup, e.g., by moving or attempting to deny immigration to a certain area.

This model has been used to assess (post-hoc) reactions to the African-American Civil Rights movement, and to describe attitudes (namely opposition) towards immigrants. Findings support the model, showing that both scarcity and the desire for an unequal distribution of resources influenced attitudes towards immigrants. Another experiment in the same study manipulated whether participants received information on immigrants that highlighted a scarcity of jobs and the success of immigrants in obtaining them. All participants were asked to judge a fictitious immigrant group: those who had received the aforementioned information (i.e., participants in the competition condition) made less favourable descriptions and attributed more negative traits to the immigrant group.

### **2.1.6 Conclusion**

That sought-after resources are at the heart of much intergroup strife is evident, especially in recent history. The list is long: oil in Nigeria, gas in Georgia, diamonds in Angola, gas and minerals in Pakistan (Follath, 2006; Plett, 2006; Le Billon, 2001). Insurgents, governments, and large resource companies battle one another for control, all amid claims of exploitation, corruption, and greed. Notably, international conditions seem ripe for new conflicts. According to the German magazine *der Spiegel* (Follath, 2006), “all major states have now realized that petroleum and natural gas are of existential strategic significance. They are the driving force behind the coming conflicts. That's why the world's powerful stake the claims wherever vital reserves of resources can be found – by force of arms or through aggressive diplomacy” (p. 2). Some volatile and failing states might be especially vulnerable to new and intensified violence. The discovery of mineral reserves in Afghanistan worth almost 1 trillion dollars (Risen, 2010), for example, may have major consequences for the war in Afghanistan (Rogers, 2010).

The international response to state failure and conflict also tends to focus on supplying and mobilizing resources as a means to achieving peace (e.g., Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002). Foreign aid and technical assistance, for example, are often provided to states in the wake of conflict, natural disaster, or other destabilizing factors. According to Collier and Hoeffler (2002), “economic policy and international aid potentially alter the risk of conflict both directly and by changing the economic variables” (p. 436). However, nation-building as part of a peacekeeping process will depend on the effective use and management of such provisions – currently, it is seldom carried out with success (François & Sud, 2006). Furthermore, aid has been viewed by some as a way to provoke rebellion (Grossman, 1992).

From both a practical and theoretical standpoint, RCT makes intuitive sense. Still, while some developments related to the original formulation have been made, there appear to be few attempts to create a theoretically sound contemporary expansion of the theory (Jackson, 1993). Such an endeavour would be fruitful, and should take into account both criticisms of the theory and advances in the social psychology of conflict.

In its current form, the theory still has constraints. RCT's original formulations were predicated on the fact that the appropriate material conditions must be present to foster group formation and intergroup interaction. As previously mentioned, the powerful assumption here is that humans will act in response to their (real or imagined) objective conditions – that is, they will act predictably, with the intent to improve their own conditions and serve their best interests. Yet individuals seldom react with uniformity to their physical, or even perceived world. In the case of conflict over natural resources, for example, neither scarcity nor abundance of natural resources have been shown to reliably predict the occurrence of conflict and relevant negative intergroup behaviour (e.g. Ron, 2005; Humphreys, 2005; Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2009). Scarcity of resources exists internationally yet often without serious discord. It seems that a difference of interest is not, by itself, sufficient to produce conflict. Furthermore, conflict can occur in situations where there is no evident material factor, or to the contrary of expected, rational behaviour.

In predicting that opposing goals promote conflict while common goals promote cooperation, RCT is a psychological theory of conflict that is remarkably devoid of actual psychology. In the wake of RCT, theoretical developments both within RCT and beyond have helped to clarify some of the psychological factors that contribute to conflict. Researchers that focus on identity, for example, hypothesize one way in which objective circumstances can, to some extent, be irrelevant to intergroup behaviour. They posit that there is an intrinsic drive for a positively distinct group identity that exists even in minimal conditions (i.e., with groups that have no shared history, or explicit commonalities). In support of this perspective is the fact that, during the camp experiments, outgroup hostility was displayed prior to group competitions. Thus, it would seem that the simple awareness of an outgroup produced hostile attitudes (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Identity has since been theorized as a major determinant of intergroup behaviour, notably conflict, and will be discussed in detail throughout section 4.1.

The Niger Delta is an unfortunate, yet pertinent example of a current region where psychological factors that contribute to violence extend beyond competition for resources. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, an oil-rich area which makes up 20% of US oil imports (Ikelegbe, 2006), is the setting of violent conflict that might appear, at first glance, to be directly linked to conflicting goals of control over resources. Reckless exploitation, environmental degradation, and general insensitivity at the hands of multinational oil corporations, in conjunction with ineffective leadership and use of military force by the state has led to the intensification of violent crime and conflict, kidnappings, and oil theft (Ikelegbe, 2006). In line with the 'greed' models of conflict, rebel militants are profiting from this strife, looting oil and appropriating the funds for their own benefit (military or otherwise). Furthermore, it has been observed that freelance fighters help these insurgencies for profit (International Crisis Group, 2006). But a closer look at this conflict, and its social origins, reveals more nuance.

With assistance from the Nigerian government, multinationals have held control over Nigerian oil for decades, and what now often manifests itself as violence and crime once began as predominantly peaceful protest. Prior to militant behaviour, most prominently carried out by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the region boasted peaceful activists, including non-violent campaigners who sacrificed their lives in their struggle for political empowerment. Ukiwo (2007) traces how militant groups comprised of a specific ethnic

group known as the Ijaw, emerged from hundreds of peaceful protesters: “The fact that it is only the Ijaw that have embarked upon violent group mobilization against the state suggests that violent conflicts arise from the specific experiences particular groups have of state power and inter-group relations, rather than simply opportunities to loot resources” (pp. 590-591).

The Ijaw, according to Ukiwo, have experienced longstanding marginalization, over and above that of Nigeria’s many other ethnic groups. Close examination of the social origins of these groups suggest that violence in the Niger Delta “can be traced to issues of longstanding injustice, inter-group inequalities and political and socio-economic marginalization” (Ikiwo, 2007, p. 590), as well as the “responses of the state to historical expressions of grievance” (p. 591). While a desire for resources and economic power may be the current stimulus for conflict, it is not a root cause of it (Ikelegbe, 2006). This transformation from activism into violence must reflect, at the very least, an interaction between objective factors, and psychological factors, especially those concerning perceptions of injustice and ethnic identity – not merely a quest to achieve and maintain control over resources.

In sum, Realistic Conflict Theory effectively highlights the functional, even rational responses to the physical world that generate and maintain social conflict. However, resource- and greed-based models of conflict, when taken on their own, are incomplete. Such models may provide one motivation for conflict, but do not explain why some people, and not all people, will engage in violence. As the following sections will illustrate, there are many psychological factors that interact with objective circumstances to contribute to social conflict.

## 2.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

### 2.2.1 Introduction

Despite the fact that hardship as a result of oil-related activities has to some extent affected all residents of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, only a handful have emerged as violent actors towards the goal of restitution. According to Ukiwo (2007), “critics of greed-based theories have rightly observed that while the causes of conflicts are context-specific and differ from one case to another, conflicts in Africa are generally rooted in perceptions of political and economic marginalization, social exclusion, and crises of identity and citizenship” (p. 590). The trajectory of protest and violence experienced by militant groups in the Niger Delta, suggest that *feelings*, stemming from *perceptions* of deprivation are crucial to understanding this conflict. Feeling deprived is akin to feeling that you or your group is being treated unfairly. In a social world manifestly concerned with human rights and equity in resource distribution, perceptions of fairness and justice should undoubtedly be of significance to intergroup relations.

Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) offers a simple yet profound insight into intergroup behaviour in general, and conflict more specifically. According to the theory, we feel deprived when we compare ourselves to others whom we perceive as better off. It is important to note that these perceptions do not always correspond to objective circumstances. Rather, relative deprivation is based on *subjective* social comparisons, which produce very real perceptions of inequity and feelings of discontent. Conceivably then, a successful corporate lawyer may feel more deprived than a department store cashier making minimum wage; this might be the case if, for example, the lawyer is comparing herself to higher paid lawyers at her firm, while the department store cashier is comparing herself to her unemployed friend. As illustrated, whether or not a person or group is actually deprived is somewhat irrelevant. Rather, relative deprivation is a *psychological interpretation*, dependant on perceptions, beliefs, and feelings of inequality.

In singling out psychological feelings of deprivation as a causal factor in social conflict, the theory might help make sense of why objective measures of inequality do not always predict the occurrence or risk of conflict. Important here are the results from the large-scale study by Collier and Hoeffler (2004) discussed in section 2.1.3. They concluded that resources and economic conditions bear more influence on the risk of conflict than deprivation and injustice. Yet a closer examination reveals that the indicators used to measure deprivation were *objective* rather than *subjective*: their analysis focused on demographic information related to income, land inequality, geographic dispersion, and religious and ethnic fractionalization. Measuring *perceptions* of inequality might have painted a different picture. Indeed, those who are most disadvantaged are not always the least content, while those who revolt can sometimes be quite advantaged. Terrorists, and their supporters, are striking examples of this counterintuitive assertion. According to Newman (2006), “as it is often pointed out, the active supporters of most terrorist organizations are not poor or uneducated” (p. 752). Likewise, poverty in particular, and weak or failing states in general, do not reliably correlate to violence perpetrated by non-state actors (see Newman, 2006).

RDT attempts to answer some crucial questions about these subjective antecedents of conflict: who will perceive their situation to be unjust? When will individuals choose to pursue collective action to better their circumstances? Currently, relative deprivation (RD) is recognized as a psychological state with widespread implications, and the potential to provide major insights into group behaviour. The theory’s impact spans across disciplines in the social sciences, and encourages a wealth of probable future research to further elucidate its applications and intricacies (Walker & Smith, 2002; Jost & Kay, 2010).

### **2.2.2 Preconditions**

One of the main challenges faced by theorists is explaining when RD will occur. Throughout the course of the theory’s development, several preconditions have been proposed as necessary to produce feelings of RD (see Davis, 1959; Runciman, 1966; Gurr, 1970; Crosby, 1976). After research failed to universally support previous suggestions, Crosby (1976) proposed a pared down list of two preconditions necessary to experience RD: wanting something, and feeling like you deserve something. Focus on identifying specific preconditions seems to have waned, however, and it remains unclear what preconditions are necessary to elicit feelings of deprivation (Jost & Kay, 2010). More prominent in the current literature are several key conceptual developments and distinctions which have helped to define the consequences of RD.

### **2.2.3 Personal/Group Distinction**

Ascertaining the root causes of social conflict is contingent on understanding factors at the group level. Indeed, the most significant contributions from RDT to date have focused on the distinction between personal and group RD. Although personal deprivation had earlier on been applied in a group context, discontent based on personal circumstances was eventually distinguished from discontent based on the circumstances of one’s group (Runciman, 1966). Whereas personal deprivation involves comparisons with other individuals, group deprivation is the discontent felt on behalf of one’s ingroup, resulting from comparisons with relevant outgroups. Actions taken because of group inequalities, whether they arise from Palestinians during an intifada, MEND group members acting on behalf of their people’s destitution, or employees involved in a labour strike, refer to feelings of group deprivation.

This distinction between personal and group deprivation creates some interesting situations, and may explain some apparent contradictions. For example, a successful person from a low-status group may experience no sense of personal deprivation, yet simultaneously feel that members of her minority group are frequently treated unfairly and placed at an illegitimate disadvantage. This

distinction has also proven especially crucial to understanding the psychological nuances of people's reactions to perceived inequality. Although these constructs may be interrelated, they appear to have differential effects. Group RD, in comparison to personal RD, has been found to be a stronger predictor of collective action (see review by Smith & Ortiz, 2002), and outgroup prejudice (Pettigrew et al., 2008; Guimond & Dambrun, 2002). Personal RD, on the other hand, has been linked to more inward-oriented emotions, such as decreased self-esteem (Tougas et al., 2004), delinquency and depression (see review by Smith & Ortiz, 2002). This discrepancy between group RD and personal RD might help explain why certain leaders of ANSA groups are wealthy and educated – such as the millionaire Osama bin Laden and his lieutenant, the physician Ayman Al Zawahiri – yet justify their violent acts as defending the injustices perpetrated against their group.

#### **2.2.4 Cognitive/Affective Distinction**

A pertinent question to the practical study of RD concerns the fundamental elements of the phenomenon: is RD the cognitive perception of inequality, the associated emotional discontent, or both? This distinction between cognitive and affective definitions of RD has been the focus of much research in the past decade. It has been suggested that for RD to occur, an individual must perceive that they or their group are relatively deprived in relation to a comparison-target, and must feel discontent, angry, or frustrated as a result (Dubé & Guimond, 1986). That is, feeling relatively deprived involves two components: a cognition and a negative emotion. Although early formulations of the theory mainly addressed deprivation as an emotion (e.g., Crosby, 1976), early studies often failed to distinguish between measurements of the cognitive belief that one is deprived, and the emotion associated with it (see review by Smith & Ortiz, 2002). Contemporary studies now often include measurements of both cognitive and affective components, and a revised emphasis on the role of emotions in predicting consequences of RD has emerged in the last decade (van Zomeren et al., 2008). This emphasis is supported by evidence: when included in measures of RD, feelings of deprivation, as opposed to cognitive components of the concept, have consistently been found to be the better predictors of collective action and negative outgroup attitudes (see review by Smith & Ortiz, 2002; van Zomeren et al., 2008; Duckitt & Mphuthing, 2002).

Simply being aware of inequality, then, may be insufficient to trigger a response to it. According to Pettigrew (2002), “affect is a core ingredient of RD, not simply a mediator of RD's effects” (p. 356). “Cold” perceptions of inequality appear to take a predictive backseat to “warm” feelings. With that said, it may be that the cognitive component is a precondition for group discontent, i.e., people first need to see group differences before feeling that those differences need to be changed (Dube & Guimond, 1986; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994).

#### **2.2.5 Group Relative Deprivation and Collective Action**

The finding that group RD consistently predicts collective action and attitudes towards the outgroup is robust. Furthermore, these studies underscore the influence of affective components of RD, especially at the group level. The integration of these two developments in RDT has greatly contributed to understanding social conflict and other forms of collective action.

The relationship between affective RD and collective action was addressed early by Gurr (1970), who postulated that “discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic, instigating condition for participants in collective violence” (p. 13). In one study (Leach et al., 2007), group-based anger was shown to mediate the relationship between participants' level of group RD, and their willingness to engage in political action even though these participants were objectively advantaged. That is, the more angry participants felt, the more they were willing to

oppose government redress that would benefit objectively disadvantaged groups. Although the mechanisms underlying the relationship between group RD and collective action are still largely unknown (Jost & Kay, 2010), group-based emotion is the most probable area of study where this relationship will be elucidated.

A comprehensive meta-analysis (Smith & Ortiz, 2002) found that studies which included measures of feelings, and focused on group RD, rather than personal RD, best predicted collective action. The authors, acknowledging that most of this evidence is correlational, conducted their own study which experimentally manipulated feelings of deprivation. In line with their previous findings, participants who made disadvantaged intergroup comparisons were more likely to endorse collective action than those who made interpersonal comparisons – however, this relationship was only significant among participants who strongly identified with their group. This finding highlights an important variable involved in feelings of group RD: group identity, and the extent to which an individual identifies with a group, may provide a way to predict who among the relatively deprived will engage in collective action. Furthermore, group identification may act as a predictor of feelings of RD itself, and its consequences (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tougas et al., 2004). In light of this, the determination of group memberships and identities is likely to be a necessary step towards predicting the behaviours of ANSAs and formation of their groups. Further research will hopefully examine this apparent relationship between group identity, RD, and collective action.

### **2.2.6 Temporal Relative Deprivation**

Another significant development over the past decade is the idea that individuals and groups may not only compare themselves to others, but to their own situation in a past or future point in time. Indeed, contained within many struggles for justice or power are references to significant points in history. Palestinians, for example, may compare the size of their current territory to its size pre-1947, leading to feelings of anger and injustice. Similarly, jihadis sometimes refer to Islam's "golden age", where the religion was practiced from Morocco and Spain in the west to Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east – a much larger region than currently – as part of their strategy to motivate sympathizers.

Feeling worse off, either in personal or group terms, in comparison to another point in time is referred to as *temporal relative deprivation*. Comparisons to one's group in the past have been shown to be spontaneously generated by individuals (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994), and may even be preferred in times of rapid change or economic difficulties (de la Sablonnière, Tougas, & Lortie-Lussier, 2009): "as people attempt to adjust to their new reality, it is temporal comparisons that allow them to make reasonable judgments concerning their relative current status" (p. 329). Predictably, then, the higher the pace of negative social change, the more individuals seem to experience feelings of temporal collective relative deprivation. So far, however, research on the effects of temporal RD is still in its infancy. Although the review by Smith and Ortiz (2002) found little evidence for linking temporal RD to collective action, future research that uses better measures of both individual and collective temporal RD will need to reassess its influence on both individual and collective behaviour.

### **2.2.7 Future Directions and Limitations**

In the original studies of relative deprivation (e.g., Stouffer et al., 1949), the concept was used as a post-hoc explanation. Later attempts to study RD directly, as a predictor of behaviour for example, were often unsuccessful (Walker & Smith, 2002). Research subsequent to the earlier studies questioned the predictive power of the theory, and its validity in general (see Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994).



These criticisms point to one of the most significant shortcomings of both this and other theories involving social comparison: it is so far impossible to reliably predict whom people will compare themselves to. At what point will individuals make group comparisons rather than individual comparisons, and which groups or individuals will be selected? Comparison choices are likely influenced by a host of factors, such as the motive involved for making the comparison. Taylor et al. (1987) have identified several possible motives for intergroup comparisons: these include motives for reality testing, group enhancement, or equity appeal, all of which may yield a different target of comparison.

Context, especially the salience of certain comparison targets in the environment, is likely a key factor. Major (1994) argues that comparison choices are shaped by proximity and perceived similarity. Thus, due to segregation and isolation experienced by disadvantaged groups, members may be more likely to make *intragroup*, rather than *intergroup* comparisons. Gartrell (2002) also emphasizes salience, and posits a model of embedded social comparisons. This approach explores comparisons in terms of ties in a social network, where comparisons are more likely to be made based on the amount and quality of interaction with others. Alternatively, context may encourage specific social comparisons which feature historically opposed groups, or an obvious advantaged outgroup responsible for the ingroup's disadvantage (Pettigrew, 2002). In addition to all these, advances in technology and communication now must be taken into consideration in any study of social comparisons: individuals in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the world have several technologies through which they can easily glimpse the drastically different lifestyles of others. Targets of comparison might include groups never previously encountered face-to-face.

Research on temporal RD suggests that temporal comparisons may be especially influenced by context: economic and social instability seem to encourage temporal group comparisons, since a group's position in the past may provide more relevant information than other contemporary social groups. But which point in the past will a group use as their comparison target? One study (de la Sablonnière, Taylor, Perozzo, & Sadykova, 2009) demonstrates that people make temporal comparisons using various points in their group's history, often concentrating on periods of historical importance. Continued developments in these domains will be crucial to increasing the predictive power of the theory.

A major conceptual challenge to RDT arises from the more structural approach to collective behaviour, in the realm of RCT and other resource-based theories of conflict. Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT; e.g., McCarthy & Zald, 2001) argues that subjective feelings of deprivation and injustice do not consistently predict behaviour. Rather, resource mobilization theorists propose that collective action is best predicted by the ability of members to acquire and mobilize resources and external support; thus, collective action is best studied by assessing the form and functions of political organizations, especially social movement organizations. Proponents of the theory have criticized RDT for failing to take into account the structural factors necessary for initiating action. They view collective action as “a strategic and political enterprise rather than a passionate response to felt injustices” (van Zomeren et al., 2008, p. 506).

This approach shares with RCT the assumption that humans will act rationally, in this case carefully weighing the costs and benefits of acting on behalf of their group – opposing the view of many social psychologists that conflict is often irrational. Still, these structural approaches point to a concrete precondition for collective action: in addition to a psychological motivation such as RD, people also need the means to act. An insurgency, for example, simply cannot happen without weapons.

Further evidence of the limitations of a “rational” approach to conflict can be appreciated through a series of studies that implicate one surprising variable involved in intergroup conflict: *relative*

*gratification* (RG), the converse of RD, describes the relatively positive feeling of being better off than others. Research on RG adheres to the “V-curve hypothesis”, which postulates that “the greatest potential for political violence is manifested both by individuals who perceive negative change...and by individuals who perceive positive change, while those who perceive no change manifest the least potential for political violence” (Grofman & Muller, 1973, p. 514). In support of the V-curve hypothesis, RG among participants has been demonstrated to engender outgroup hostility both in laboratory (Guimond & Dambrun, 2002) and natural settings (Dambrun et al., 2006). In Dambrun et al. (2006), prejudice in South Africa towards immigrants was found to be highest among individuals who experienced both RD and RG. These findings suggest that inequality, rather than simply perceived disadvantage, may be a driving force behind social conflict (Guimond & Dambrun, 2002).

### **2.2.8 Conclusion**

One of the theory’s most compelling proposals is that relative feelings of deprivation may provide a root psychological cause of intergroup conflict and other forms of collective action. Still, the best approach to understanding social conflict will likely be one that integrates RDT and other psychological theories with the interdisciplinary structural approach inherent in RCT and RMT, among others (see Klandermans, 1984). Indeed, based on a review, Jost & Kay (2010) conclude that “the perception of relative deprivation *in and of itself* does not seem to be a sufficient cause of anger, protest behaviour, or participation in collective action, as Crosby’s (1976) original list of preconditions suggested” (p. 1135), but rather, is part of a “dynamic interplay of a complicated set of social, psychological, and political variables” (p. 1136).

RDT is further valuable in that it provides insight into the relationships between variables that can produce actual disadvantage, such as socioeconomic status and psychology: “These relationships mean that the broad effects of such macro-variables as age, social class, and education – so central to sociological and political science theory – are in part mediated by RD for a range of important dependent variables (e.g., collective violence, prejudice)” (Pettigrew, 2002, p. 368). According to Pettigrew (2002), the theory seems to attract much of its praise, and its criticism, from its broadness and excessive application. Yet it is this broadness that provides the theory’s integrative capabilities, and suggests powerful developments to come. Overall, as Pettigrew observes, RDT may have more ambiguities than limitations, all of which can be clarified in future research.

## **3 Legitimizing the Social System: Psychological Factors Contributing to Stability**

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### **3.1 Introduction**

A necessary component to understanding how conflict emerges is to understand situations where conflict does not occur despite the presence of oft-cited causal factors. These situations are surprisingly quite widespread. Indeed, amongst enduring inequality, infringements on the rights of individuals, and mistreatment at the hands of the privileged few, one would expect the international atmosphere to be extremely volatile. By emphasizing self-interest and biases favouring one's group, the approaches to conflict described thus far seem to suggest that groups should consistently be in conflict, each one striving to maximize their own gains and establish the superiority of their own group. Political parties and leaders should presumably be supported in accordance with the interests of each group; protests, revolutions and other attempts at creating social change should occur regularly.

In general, however, the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources within a cross-cultural social hierarchy does not seem to instigate widespread revolt or even mild protest. Complacency and peace are observed much more frequently than conflict and other manifestations of intergroup competition. Dominant groups, meanwhile, often obtain a stronghold on power with little struggle. Surprisingly, disadvantaged groups not only seem to tolerate their social conditions, but sometimes actively support the very system that perpetuates their disadvantage.

In response to approaches that overlook these phenomena, the theories of social dominance and system justification address the remarkable stability of most social systems. Although they are distinct theories, Social Dominance and System Justification Theory both purport to explain the maintenance of social inequality. Identifying the pathways through which the social order is maintained advances a broader understanding of the nature of states which might be especially prone to violence; it also offers insight into the exceptions – the revolutions, protests, and intergroup conflicts – that do occur. In turn, this understanding might allow for us to predict when the system will break down or fail, and accordingly, when conflict will erupt.

### **3.2 Social Dominance Theory**

#### **3.2.1 Overview of the Theory**

Social Dominance Theory (SDT) is a broad, multi-level analysis of the dynamics of power differences and group-based oppression (e.g. Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Sidanius et al., 2004). The theory explains hierarchy-supporting behaviours – behaviours that maintain status differences – that are observed to be fundamental to all human societies, as well as the explanatory mechanisms behind them. In turn, it provides a perspective on the root causes of conflict and oppressive behaviours concerning the treatment of one group at the hands of another. Research on social dominance draws from several disciplines including social psychology, political sociology, political science, and evolutionary psychology: "...it is neither strictly a psychological nor a sociological theory, but rather an attempt to connect the worlds of individual personality and attitudes with the domains of institutional behaviour and social structure" (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001, p. 31). It has also generated a widely used scale that measures a personality trait, referred to as *social dominance orientation*.

SDT describes the group-based social hierarchies that are found consistently in human societies. According to the theory, hierarchies exist based on age, gender, or more socially-constructed characteristics such as race, religion, caste, or social class: this final category is referred to as “arbitrary-set”, and varies according to time and setting. While hierarchies based on age and gender have existed throughout human history, arbitrary-set systems are found primarily when there is sustainable economic surplus, as is the case in most modern societies. It is these types of systems that are associated with the most violence, brutality and oppression. These hierarchies are persistent: “...every attempt to abolish arbitrary-set, group-based hierarchy within societies of economic surplus have, without exception, failed” (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001, p. 35). Sidanius and Pratto draw on two examples of arbitrary-set hierarchies that have persisted for years: the caste system in India, and the racial hierarchy in America. Forms of intergroup behaviour, such as prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, must be understood in light of this innate tendency to form group-based hierarchies.

At the societal level, social dominance is perpetuated by wide-spread consensual beliefs, referred to as *legitimizing myths*: these are defined as “attitudes, values, beliefs, stereotypes, and ideologies that provide moral and intellectual justification for the social practices that distribute social value within the social system” (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001, p. 45). The concept draws from various theorists, including Marx, Gramsci, and Durkheim. Legitimizing myths may endorse social inequality, or, often less effectively, social equality. Those that maintain social inequality are referred to as “hierarchy-enhancing” (HE), and those that don’t are “hierarchy-attenuating” (HA). Examples of HE legitimizing myths are sexism and racism, fate and manifest destiny, and belief in the Protestant work ethic. HA myths include equity-oriented ideas such as socialism and feminism. Crucial to this concept is the fact that a significant portion of these myths is likely to be shared across groups and societies (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). They are central to the socio-political structure of nations and states – as such, it is reasonable to predict that outside efforts to change such systems might upset a stubborn, though delicate, balance of power.

The impact of a given legitimizing myth varies according to potency: that is, “the degree to which it will help promote, maintain, or overthrow a given group-based hierarchy” (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001, p. 46). This depends on four factors: *consensuality*, *embeddedness*, *certainty* and *mediational strength*. They are defined as follows:

- Consensuality: the extent to which beliefs are shared across the social system, and within both dominant and subordinate groups;
- Embeddedness: the degree to which a legitimizing myth is embedded within a culture;
- Certainty: the degree of certainty or truth afforded to a given legitimizing myth, for example in the form of intellectual support for a myth, or long-held religious beliefs;
- Mediation strength: the degree to which a legitimizing myth bridges the relationship between the desire to support group-based social hierarchies and the actual endorsement of HE or HA social policies.

At the individual level, social dominance orientation (SDO) is a measure of one’s predisposition to support group-based hierarchies, in which “superior” groups dominate “inferior” groups (see Sidanius & Pratto, 2001 for the questionnaire used to measure this predisposition). Importantly, individuals will differ in the degree to which they endorse HE behaviours. Sidanius and Pratto (2001) emphasize the impact of this orientation, as it directly influences the implementation of social policies. Individuals who are high in SDO should be more likely to accept HE legitimizing myths, and endorse the existence of social hierarchies, regardless of whether their own group is

dominant or subordinate. These people enable social hierarchies to persist and continuously reproduce. Individuals who are low in SDO should be more likely to support HA legitimizing myths, and endorse equality (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). The existence of SDO as a personality trait has been empirically supported; it has been shown to impact prejudice, and to relate to an assortment of social and political ideologies (Malle et al., 1994). More pertinent to the understanding of ANSAs, however, is a preliminary study on personality traits used to distinguish among individuals who might be drawn to violent groups.

In a study at McGill University (King, 2009), students in a political science class participated in a week-long simulation of large-scale regional insurgency. Before the simulation, participants were able to request which roles they would prefer to enact. The available roles represented the various regional parties concerned by the regional conflict. Many countries were included in the simulation, such as the United States, Canada, Japan, Russia, China, Brazil, and India. Students could choose to be government officials, such as the president or the secretary of defence of a country. Alternatively students could role-play non-governmental actors, such as the leaders of a country's trade union. Students could also role-play international organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, or media organizations. Of particular interest for the researcher, however, was the possibility for students to choose the role of insurgents.

Two weeks prior to the start of the simulation, the 78 undergraduate student participants were asked to complete a questionnaire including measures of their attitudes and beliefs concerning justice, fairness, and violence. These data were collected to explore (1) if these psychological measures could predict role selection in the simulation, and (2) if these psychological measures could predict which participants would engage in violence during the simulation.

The questionnaires comprised six psychological scales: the *Arnett inventory of sensation seeking*; *global belief in a just world scale*, which measures the extent to which an individual believes that the world is a fair place where people get what they deserve; the *system justification scale*, which measures general beliefs about the legitimacy of the overarching social order; *Velicer attitudes toward violence scale*, which assesses the favorableness of individuals' evaluations of violence; the *moral disengagement scale*, which determines how easily people can relinquish moral self-control in order to perpetrate cruel behaviours; and the *social dominance scale*, which provides a measure of SDO.

Although no psychological measure was shown to predict participants' involvement in violence during the simulation, attitudes towards violence and SDO emerged as the two predictors of participants' choice of simulation role (see Figure 1, next page). Compared to other roles, people who chose to be insurgents scored significantly higher on the SDO scale, a somewhat counter-intuitive finding, and also expressed more favourable attitudes towards violence, a less surprising finding.

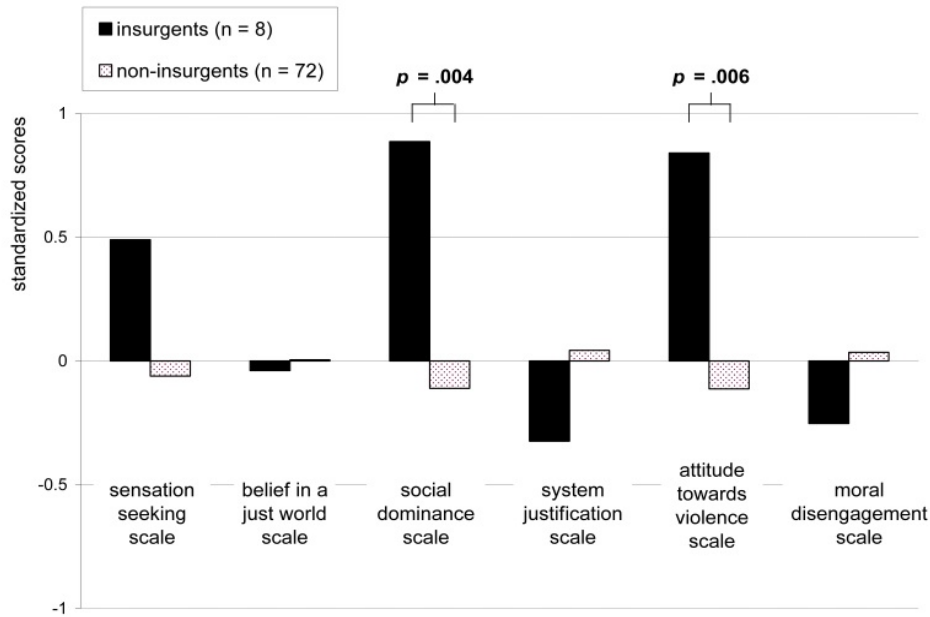


Figure 1: Scores of psychological scales among participants who chose to be insurgents and non-insurgents.

Of course, future research will need to confirm if SDO-related attitudes reliably predict who will engage in simulated non-state violence, and ultimately in real-world insurgent activities. Yet, these results suggest that people self-select for the roles they undertake, and question the widespread assumption that a psychological profile of those who engage in violent extremism does not exist (Horgan, 2005; Sageman, 2004). Whereas initially psychologists were biased towards using psychopathology, such as narcissism and missing father figures, to explain violent extremism, the current emphasis on “normalcy” may have resulted in a new bias. That is, current theorizing emphasizes situational factors as the primary – and in some cases the exclusive – drivers motivating ANSAs towards violence. Of course, situations undoubtedly play a role. However, individual characteristics are significant determinants of how people respond to situations (Funder, 1997). SDO, among other possibilities, might help explain why only some individuals join an insurgency, while a much larger population is exposed to the same situational factors.

### 3.2.2 Summary of the Theory

In sum, the three main postulates of Social Dominance Theory are as follows (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001):

1. Group-based hierarchies are found in all social systems. Whereas those based on gender and age have existed to some degree in all human societies, arbitrary-set systems are maintained in societies with consistent economic surplus.
2. Group conflict and different forms of oppression (such as prejudice and discrimination based on group membership) are manifestations of the human tendency to organize into group-based social hierarchies.

3. There are counterbalancing hierarchy-enhancing (HE) and hierarchy-attenuating (HA) forces in all societies. Both forces are manifest in *legitimizing myths*: HE forces include ideologies, religious discourse, and beliefs that, most often, promote social stratification and the notion of individual responsibility. HA forces are found in social struggles for equality, and include doctrines such as feminism and socialism; however, these struggles generally seem to only moderate inequality.

### 3.2.3 Criticisms and Limitations

Social Dominance Theory has sparked a debate concerning its depiction of human nature, and the consequences of this for (constructive) social change (see Turner & Reynolds, 2003; Sidanius & Pratto, 2003; Schmidt & Branscombe, 2003; Pratto et al., 2006; Rubin & Hewstone, 2004). The harshest commentaries on the theory object to its “bleak” portrayal of the world, charging that it suggests a fixed view of human nature, rooted in predetermining evolutionary and biological forces (Turner & Reynolds, 2003; Jost et al., 2004), while neglecting the prevalence of real, positive social change (Rubin & Hewstone, 2004; Turner & Reynolds, 2003). Turner and Reynolds (2003) argue that this portrayal not only justifies existing inequality, but may, in some way, promote it: “This theory not only makes futile any effort to liberate humanity from oppression, domination and divisive hatreds, it also asserts that social systems built on perpetual coercion, domination and conflict are ‘adaptive’; they are good for us” (p. 199).

Turner and Reynolds’ (2003) rebuttal addresses several other points of contention. They dispute or fail to observe evolutionary, biological, and psychological evidence of a human predisposition to endorse inequality. They also contend that the theory is reductionist, in effect reducing the entire social structure, including all group relations and influences, into one psychological drive or attitude (SDO). In fact, they argue that intergroup attitudes “follow from the beliefs, theories, and ideologies which groups develop to make sense of their place in the social structure and the nature of their relationships with other groups. SDO is a product of social life rather than an underlying cause” (Turner & Reynolds, 2003, p. 200). That is, intergroup attitudes are determined by the social structure and thus cannot exist prior to the existence of that structure.

In line with the reasoning put forward by Turner and Reynolds (2003), Schmitt, Branscombe, and Kappen (2003) point out that group memberships are a significant factor in assessing SDO; as such, SDO cannot be a general orientation, but a shifting one. The groups an individual belongs to can vary significantly in terms of status: for example, a person may belong to a racial minority, yet occupy a relatively high-status profession. The authors suggest that scores on a social dominance scale are dependent on what social categorizations are salient at the time attitudes are being assessed.

Although these are valid points, Sidanius and Pratto are convincing in pointing out that social dominance has been very misunderstood (see Sidanius et al., 2004). In general, they do not dispute that SDO is influenced by social categorizations and social context, and they reconcile their theory with the many researchers who emphasize the influence of group identity in intergroup relations. Furthermore, while experimental studies concerning the theory are relatively few, this void can be explained by the overemphasis on the “personality” aspect of the theory: though unintentional, the most significant contribution of the theory has been the SDO scale, and researchers have generally overlooked other aspects of the theory (Sidanius et al., 2004). Regardless, the theory’s perspective is valuable, especially in emphasizing the ideologies and beliefs that contribute to the stability of social systems, which to some extent complicate the social factors thought to foster conflict.

### 3.3 System Justification Theory

#### 3.3.1 Overview of the Theory

While social dominance describes the human tendency to stratify into dominant and subdominant groups, System Justification Theory (SJT) describes the complacency that maintains this. Examples of such counterintuitive behaviour are ubiquitous. In 2004, the ten American states with the lowest household median income, where people are least likely to have healthcare and most likely to live in poverty, all voted Republican, a party whose platform supports disproportionate tax cuts that favour the wealthy and opposes universalized healthcare (Andrews, 2004; Drazen, Bush, & Gore, 2000). Why would members of disadvantaged groups continuously support political parties that not only neglect to serve their best interests, but appear to counter them?

SJT proposes that people are motivated to justify the system and the social conditions that it produces, *even if they are put at a disadvantage by that very system* – the “system”, here, referring to any external social arrangement, including governments, organizations, and institutions (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Because people are motivated to view the system as fair, individuals will show complacency or support for existing structural inequalities, even when those inequalities impair their own, or their group’s, well-being. In this way, system justification (SJ) is a response to the predominance of theories that paint a picture of the world as sharply divided, chaotic, and prone to violence: “In the social scientific imagination, it is as if the advantaged are relentlessly looking to cash in on their dominance and the disadvantaged are proud revolutionaries-in-waiting.” (Jost et al., 2004, p. 883). In line with other “justification” theories that explain similar behaviour, such as false consciousness, Marxism, and belief in a just world (e.g., Lerner, 1980), SJT holds that a motive exists to some degree in everyone to see the system as fair, just, and natural.

The theory expands beyond two motives previously described by other theories. Emphasized in the literature on psychology, according to SJ theorists, are motives for maintaining a positive view of the self, and for maintaining a positive view of one’s group. For example, most prominent theories in social psychology, such as social identity (see Section 4.1) and social dominance, limit their scope to studying self-interest, in-group biases, and group identities (e.g., Jost & Banaji, 2004). Although SJ theorists are in agreement with the existence of these motives, they posit a third motive, referred to as SJ, that facilitates support of the social system, or status quo, sometimes at the expense of the first two motives. In the next section, we outline why people might justify a system that disadvantages them.

#### 3.3.2 The Role of Stereotypes

One pathway through which the social order is legitimized is through the use of stereotypes (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004). Stereotypes “...are hypothesized to accompany any system characterized by the separation of people into roles, classes, positions, or statuses, because such arrangements tend to be explained and perceived as justifiable by those who participate in them” (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p. 295). The function of these stereotypes can be understood in light of some counterintuitive phenomena: namely, the prevalence of outgroup favouritism (i.e., bias in favour of the outgroup) and negative self-stereotyping (i.e., negative traits attributed to the self and ingroup).

Stereotypes serve to justify the status quo by corresponding to a group’s status. For example, a high-status group, such as executives of Fortune 500 companies, may be stereotyped as intelligent or capable, while a low-status group, such as poor people, may be stereotyped as lazy or



unintelligent. It is important to notice here that these stereotypes are status-relevant, in that they focus on traits that are directly relevant to one's position in the social hierarchy. In an individualistic meritocratic society, people who are labelled "intelligent" will be expected to have higher status. In this same society, people who are labelled "lazy" will be expected to have a relatively lower status. The system, and the roles that accompany it, are therefore justified through the presence of status-relevant stereotypes that correspond to a group's position in the social hierarchy.

Although SJ theorists do not suggest that the SJ motive "accounts for the formation and maintenance of all stereotypes" (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p. 301), stereotypes may be an unconscious manifestation of SJ and serve an ideological function. The key to the effectiveness of these stereotypes is that they are commonly endorsed. According to the theory, all individuals contribute to the perpetuation of the hierarchy by holding positive stereotypes about members of advantaged groups and maintaining negative stereotypes about members of disadvantaged groups. Thus, the stereotype that Fortune 500 executives are more intelligent is believed by the majority of Western society, including those who are members of low-status groups. The stereotype that poor people are lazy is believed not only by high-status group members, but also by poor people themselves. This societal consensus is the scaffold of the status quo: it imbues the system with fairness and contributes to the complacency of low-status group members (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Empirical evidence supports these claims: when the ingroup is believed to be lower in status, negative stereotypes are applied (Jost & Burgess, 2000).

An intriguing new area of research expands on the theme of status-relevant stereotypes. Rather than occurring in isolation, these status-relevant stereotypes are often accompanied by status-irrelevant traits – traits that are irrelevant to a group's position in the social hierarchy – such as amiability and warmth (Fiske et al., 2002). In the past decade, research by Fiske and colleagues has established that the most frequent stereotypes attributed to groups fall under the dimensions of *competence* and *warmth* (Fiske et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002). Fiske and colleagues also note the frequent occurrence of mixed stereotype content in categorizing groups. This mixed stereotype content, which may be referred to as "complementary stereotypes", illustrates how groups that are viewed as high in competence are often stereotyped as low in warmth, while groups that are viewed as low in competence are stereotyped as high in warmth (Fiske et al., 2002). Fortune 500 executives, for example, are not only perceived to be highly competent (e.g., intelligent), but in a complementary fashion, are also viewed as lacking in warmth. Low-status groups, such as members of certain cultural groups, may be stereotyped as low in competence (e.g., unintelligent), but they are also perceived to be high in warmth (Cuddy et al., 2007).

Several experiments indicate that exposure to complementary stereotypes may increase participants' support for the system (Jost & Kay, 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003). In one experiment on gender stereotypes, Jost and Kay (2005) investigated the effects of exposing men and women to stereotypes of their gender groups, these stereotypes being "communal" (warmth-related) for women, and "agentic" (competence-related) for men. Exposure to the stereotype of women as communal was found to increase female participants' levels of support for the system. Although the explicit mechanisms behind this effect have not been discussed, these findings point towards a possible role of warmth stereotypes in the production of SJ, and thus in maintaining social harmony.

### **3.3.3 How System Justification Maintains Social Harmony**

Empirical support for SJ has been abundant in the relatively short period since its inception. The theory has been used to explain such phenomena as outgroup bias, depressed entitlement, and political conservatism. System justifying beliefs have been found to be held to a higher degree

amongst people with higher needs for certainty, order, structure, and closure, as well as those who perceive the world as dangerous, and fear death (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Individuals who have higher cognitive complexity and openness to experience are less likely to endorse such beliefs (Jost & Hunyady, 2005).

A recent study has suggested a role for emotion, particularly distress, as influencing system justifying beliefs. Wakslak, Jost, Tyler, and Chen (2007) found that the endorsement of system justifying ideologies was correlated with *decreased* moral outrage, negative affect, and intentions to help the disadvantaged. When members of advantaged groups were exposed to a system-justification passage (passages which contained a “rags-to-riches” story), moral outrage, and not general negative affect or guilt, was found to mediate the dampening effect of SJ on intentions to help the disadvantaged.

A central set of hypotheses predicts the effects of a threat to the system. These threats might refer to outside attacks on one’s country, as in the case of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001; other scenarios involving armed conflict, where external forces threaten an existing government or set of customs and policies, should likewise constitute a threat to the system. Evidence shows that when a threat to the system is perceived, individuals will act in ways that defend and further reinforce the credibility of that system. In one study, participants asked to think about terrorism, showed higher scores on an SJ scale (Ullrich & Cohrs, 2007). Furthermore, individuals have been shown to increase their use of system-justifying stereotypes, such as powerful groups being labelled as more intelligent, while low-status groups are viewed as lazy, when there are threats to the system (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Kay et al., 2005).

### **3.3.4 Keeping Disadvantaged Groups Disadvantaged**

The SJ motive, according to its proponents, can at least partially explain evidence of internalized inferiority displayed by members of disadvantaged groups. Findings that show members of disadvantaged groups displaying conflicting attitudes towards the ingroup, and favourable attitudes towards the outgroup, have long perplexed social scientists.

SJ offers a framework for interpreting this behaviour. In accordance with the theory, one explanation suggests that these group members are acting to reduce ideological dissonance: this account follows from a cognitive dissonance perspective to propose that the motive to justify the system may be strongest amongst the disadvantaged, because these people have the most to rationalize (Jost et al., 2003): “Dissonance might arise from the contradictory cognitions that (a) the system is putting me (and my group) at a disadvantage, and (b) through our acquiescence, my group and I are contributing to the stability of the system” (p. 16). One way to reduce this dissonance, then, is to support the system. Indeed, a series of five survey studies (Jost et al., 2003) found that support for economic and social inequality, a desire to limit rights to criticize government, support and trust in government, and believing in other meritocratic ideologies, was higher among disadvantaged groups compared to relatively advantaged groups, even after controlling for the effects of education

These predictions come with stipulations: self-interests and group-interests may compete, thus enhanced SJ might not always be the case. The dominance of the SJ motive will depend on group identifications and the salience of group memberships, the degree of choice afforded to individuals, and the cultural climate.

### 3.3.5 Criticisms and Limitations

Despite its lofty ambitions, the theory avoids addressing the exact psychological mechanism explaining why people would be motivated to justify the system, even when it puts them at a disadvantage. According to Jost and Kay (2010), SJ may satisfy several needs: epistemic needs, related to certainty and stability; existential needs related to threat and safety; and relational needs, i.e. the need to have a shared reality with others. As such, SJ is theorized to serve a *palliative* function (Jost & Kay, 2010; Jost et al., 2003). Essentially, people engage in SJ because it makes them feel better.

Yet, for members of disadvantaged groups, supporting the system is associated with decreased self-esteem, increased depression, and increased neuroticism (e.g., decreased self-esteem and ingroup favouritism in Jost & Thompson, 2000; see Jost et al., 2004). It is logical to assume that these negative psychological effects would outweigh any benefit of maintaining the status quo, to hardly mention the tangible losses involved with maintaining a system that neglects to serve your own group's interests.

In addition, there is little evidence of the mechanisms that Jost and others have proposed. There appear to be no direct measures of the palliative affect of SJ. The extent to which disadvantaged groups do show support for the system is itself contentious: such studies are often correlational, and have relatively small statistical effects (e.g., Jost et al., 2003). SJ may, as has been suggested, serve a palliative function. But, amongst disadvantaged group members, it seems that there must be another mechanism that enables some of these individuals to support the status quo. One mechanism may hinge on complementary stereotypes and their function.

Complementary stereotypes, as discussed earlier, might play an important role in placating disadvantaged groups into accepting their diminished position. Although status-relevant stereotypes such as “incompetent” and “lazy” serve to justify existing conditions, according to SJ, the complementary, status-irrelevant warmth stereotypes, such as “kind” and “sociable”, might also play an important role. These positive stereotypes might be providing low-status groups with a positive social identity. Indeed, social identity theorists discuss “creativity” as a way to compensate for low-status in a fixed status quo (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1986; see section 4.1).

The Taylor laboratory at McGill University has tested this hypothesis in two unpublished studies. The first of these studies (King et al., 2009) explained perceptions of SJ among senior citizens, a relatively low-status group often depicted as low in competence yet high in warmth (Cuddy et al., 2007; Cuddy et al., 2005). Elderly participants completed a series of questionnaires containing measures of their belief in the low-competence/high-warmth stereotype of their group, their level of identification with other senior citizens (Collective Identification), and their level of SJ. In addition, a measure of the uncertainty reduction hypothesis was provided by the Felt Uncertainty scale, designed to obtain a measure of uncertainty in participants, and the Need for Cognitive Closure scale, which measures individuals' preference for order, structure, and predictability, as well as discomfort with ambiguity and uncertainty. The results indicated that senior citizens' belief in the warmth stereotype of their group correlated with increased SJ. Furthermore, this relationship was mediated by measures of collective identification, and not by measures of reduction in uncertainty. Overall, these results do not support the prevailing assumption, advanced by Jost and others, that SJ serves a palliative function. The finding that collective identification mediated the relationship between belief in the warmth stereotype and SJ suggests group-derived benefits obtained from positive status-irrelevant stereotypes may drive the relationship between warmth stereotypes and SJ.

On the whole, then, the question is not so much whether SJ exists, but *why*. Like social dominance, Jost's System Justification Theory identifies important, often overlooked behaviour,

but it has not as yet provided enough insight into the exact processes and mechanisms that allow such counterintuitive behaviour to occur.

## 4 Identity and Emotion: Psychological Factors Contributing to Conflict

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### 4.1 The Social Identity Approach

#### 4.1.1 Introduction

Numerous small- and large-scale conflicts involving race, ethnicity, and religion can be aptly described as concerning issues of identity. A case in point concerns the Québécois in Canada, who strive to maintain their distinct French-Canadian identity and language (see Wohl et al., in press). Although separating from Canada is an ever-present option to safeguard their identity, some Québécois espoused more violent behaviours to defend their group identity. Indeed, between 1963 and 1970, the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ), a French-Canadian terrorist group that called for the independence of Québec, was responsible for many violent acts, including the bombing of the Montreal Stock Exchange, kidnappings, and murder. Outside of Canada, motivations related to group identity are implicated in both domestic and transnational conflicts such as those between India and Pakistan, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, and the Tutsi and Hutu of Rwanda. While resources in these areas may play a role, the powerful presence of group identities implies that there is a more psychological motive, one with the potency to elicit fiery, emotional battles.

Identity has been the focus of the social psychology of intergroup relations for several decades, originating with the development of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identities are psychological representations of an individual's group memberships that help to make up an individual's self-concept. These social identities<sup>1</sup> can be based on ethnicity, religion, or political orientation, for example; they can be determined by specified requirements, or can be more vague; they can be chosen, implied or unchangeable (Huddy, 2001). These identities need not bear any relation to actual or physical group membership – a social identity can be subjectively determined by the individual.

In its original form, Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposed that individuals are motivated to maintain a positive and distinct (or “positively distinct”) group identity. Thus, we seemingly all seek to belong to groups that are both valued positively and are sufficiently distinct from other groups. Judgments concerning the positive status and distinctiveness of a group are made using social comparisons: “...to the extent that the in-group is perceived as both different and better than the outgroup, thereby achieving positive distinctiveness, one's social identity is enhanced” (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, p. 3). When the groups we belong to are valued negatively, or are too inclusive, we carry out strategies in order to gain a positive and distinct social identity.

SIT emerged in the 70s and 80s to explain intergroup relations from a strictly social psychological perspective (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994; Abrams & Hogg, 2004). Explanations for conflict and group behaviour prior to this either viewed humans as behaving rationally (e.g., Realistic Conflict Theory), or attempted to explain intergroup relations in terms of individual and interpersonal motives and behaviours (Tajfel, 1986). According to SIT theorists, group behaviour is not entirely based on calculated reason, nor on “pathological, deviant, or irrational individual psychology” (Turner & Reynolds, 2010, p. 18). Even so, SIT was not intended to replace RCT or disregard the significance of real conflicts of interest, but rather to supplement this approach with an account of

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the terms *group identity*, *social identity*, and *collective identity* are used interchangeably. In line with the literature in social psychology, these terms should be interpreted as being synonymous with one another.

social psychological motivations, and address the cultural, political and social context of behaviour (Tajfel, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2010).

#### **4.1.2 Social Categorization and Minimal Group Experiments**

SIT came to fruition as a result of a series of experiments, referred to as the “minimal group experiments”. These experiments cogently conveyed how the simple and arbitrary categorization of individuals into groups could elicit biases. They also set the groundwork for a minimal group paradigm that has become a widely used methodological tool for the study of intergroup behaviour.

Several pivotal experiments contributed to the formulation of SIT. In a precursor to the minimal group experiments, Tajfel and Wilkes (1963) successfully tested the hypothesis that the arbitrary categorization of nonsocial stimuli would lead to an increased perception of difference between categories, and increased perception of similarity within categories. The subsequent minimal group experiments went a step further, testing the categorization of social stimuli (e.g., Tajfel et al., 1971). Here, experimenters strived to create artificial groups, devoid of any of the factors, contextual or otherwise, normally associated with group membership (hence the term minimal group). The point was to demonstrate that even in these quite arbitrary groups, individuals might show ingroup favouritism. The dependent variable, designed to measure group favouritism, involved the allocation of rewards to ingroup and outgroup members (whose identities were anonymous).

In the first of these experiments, British schoolboys participated in a task where they were asked to estimate the number of given dots. The boys were assigned to one of two conditions, termed as the “value condition” and “neutral condition”. Although all participants were randomly categorized, those in the “value condition” were told they would be separated based on their accuracy at the dot-estimation task; those in the “neutral condition” were told they would be separated based on whether they were an overestimator or an underestimator – an arbitrary distinction. The boys were then asked to distribute money to participants. The results of the experiment showed that individuals in *both* conditions, when given the choice, preferred to allocate money to an in-group member, rather than an out-group member. A subsequent experiment repeated the finding that individuals showed favouritism towards members of their own group, even though there was no meaningful basis for group membership.

These results have been widely replicated (see Tajfel & Turner, 1986 for a review). According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), “the basic and highly reliable finding is that the trivial, ad hoc intergroup categorization leads to in-group favoritism and discrimination against the out-group” (p. 14). When decisions are made that directly affect the self, this experimental paradigm will generally elicit predictable self-interest; when group membership is made salient, however, individuals will display ingroup bias, even when it is at a personal cost (Turner & Reynolds, 2010). In showing how simple group categorization – void of any history, context, and real loyalties – could elicit such in-group bias, the minimal group experiments pointed towards a profoundly psychological explanation for intergroup behaviour.

#### **4.1.3 Specifications of the Theory: Strategies for Positive Social Identity and the Potential for Conflict**

SIT posits that social comparisons with relevant outgroups determine whether an individual will have a positive social identity. When an individual perceives his or her group to be sufficiently different and better than the outgroup, the need for a positive social identity will be met. While all individuals are hypothesized to have a motive for achieving a positive and distinct identity and

will engage in behaviours towards this end, the overarching social structure will influence how groups differ in status, power, and wealth. The theory describes the conditions and motivations for conflict, resulting from each group's competing attempts to maintain or attain relatively high group status and distinctiveness (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). As such, "...competition and conflict are seen as an essential aspect of the intergroup situation" (p. 83).

Those with an adequate social identity, or high-status groups, should have relatively fewer challenges concerning their group's position. These groups should attempt to maintain or extend their comparative superiority. In contrast, the options for low-status group members vary and may be constrained by the social forces maintaining their comparatively lower place in the social hierarchy. The pathway towards achieving a positive identity will also depend on how these individuals perceive "the nature and the structure of the relations between social groups in their society" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 9). When social groups are viewed to be permeable, such that social mobility between groups is possible, individuals dissatisfied with their current social identity will attempt to move into another group. Such social mobility within the social system should pose no threat to the status quo and those high-status groups within it. Here, an individual with an inadequate social identity may attempt to leave his or her own group and join a relatively higher-status group. Social mobility is a strategy used frequently among immigrants transitioning into new cultures and societies. For example, immigrants coming to North America have a history of Anglicizing their last (and sometimes first) names, although this practice seems to have somewhat declined in frequency.

Alternatively, groups in society may be perceived to be highly stratified and impermeable. In these situations, people will tend to act on behalf of their group membership rather than as individuals. When groups are viewed as impermeable, members of disadvantaged groups may choose between several alternative strategies to achieve a satisfactory social identity (see Figure 2, next page). The choice, however, depends on a host of psychological factors, most notably perceived options (cognitive alternatives), and beliefs about the social hierarchy (stability-instability, legitimacy-illegitimacy). For a social system to be considered as illegitimate, or simply unstable, a disadvantaged group member must be able to perceive alternatives to the system.

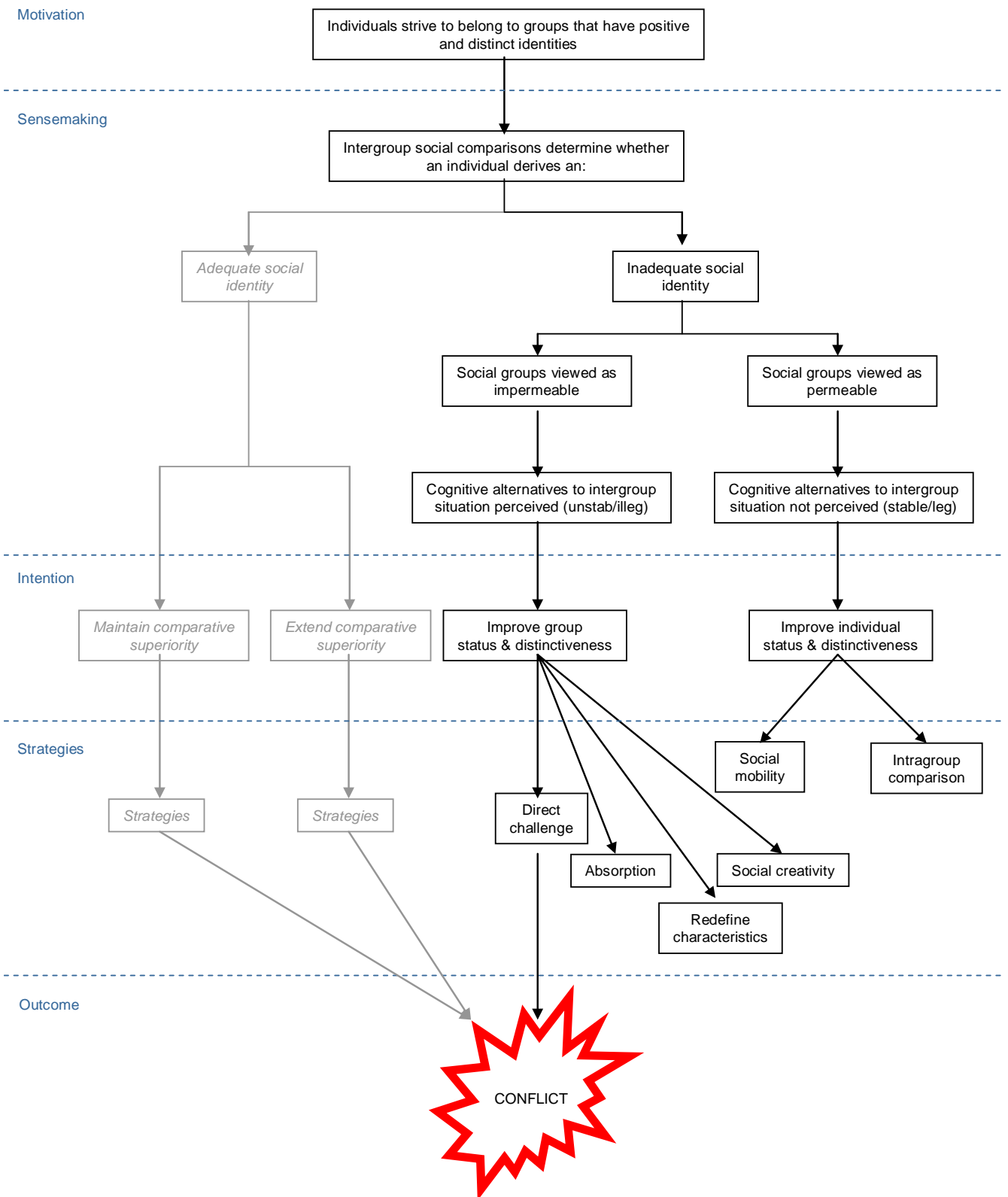


Figure 2: Schematic representation of Social Identity Theory



A group may also “attempt to be absorbed” into a higher-status group (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, p. 84). To the extent that there are no obvious constraints, members of low-status groups might try to pass as high-status group members: for example, immigrants from a developing country may choose to adopt the culture and customs of the West, shedding those of their original culture. This strategy, however, may be difficult to attain: it “requires fundamental cultural and psychological change to become successful” (p. 84). Another strategy is redefining characteristics, where a group reinterprets negatively evaluated characteristics in a positive light. A prime example is the “Black is beautiful” movement, created with the goal of reversing societal perceptions of Black people’s physical traits as undesirable. A slightly different strategy would be to promote social evaluations based on less conventional characteristics. Labelled as social creativity, an example of this strategy would be aboriginal peoples’ emphasis of their relationship with nature. Finally, a group might choose to improve its status by directly challenging a dominant group and partaking in some form of collective action. This strategy is most likely to elicit conflict, whether violent or nonviolent, as the dominant groups strive to maintain their own positive social identity.

#### **4.1.4 When Does a Group Challenge Another? The Route to Collective Action**

Collective action most often refers to “any action that aims to improve the status, power, or influence of an entire group, rather than that of one or a few individuals” (van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009, p. 646). As previously mentioned, SIT theorizes that the perception of cognitive alternatives when status differences are viewed as illegitimate and unstable, can lead people to participate in collective action. Several recent models of collective action have taken an integrative approach to understanding the causes of collective action, implicating a variety of psychosocial factors, but hinging on social identity as the primary determinant of the decision to engage in action.

Van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears (2008) offer an integrative social identity model of collective action that takes into account three areas of focus pertaining to *injustice* (namely from the perspective of Relative Deprivation Theory) and *efficacy* in addition to the, once again, central role of identity. Social identity has a central place in this model “because it directly motivates collective action and simultaneously bridges the injustice and efficacy explanations of collective action” (p. 505). Injustice, specifically perceived injustice or deprivation, has been considered a key antecedent of collective action in RDT (see Section 2.2). Conversely, perceived *group efficacy*, “defined as the shared belief that one’s group can resolve its grievances through unified effort” (p. 507) has also been found to be reliable predictor of collective action (Mummendey et al., 1999; see Resource Mobilization Theory, Section 2.2.7). Merging these streams of research, a quantitative research synthesis lent support to an integrative social identity model of collective action, above several other integrative models that had been previously proposed (van Zomeren et al., 2008): injustice, efficacy, and identity were all found to predict collective action. Additionally, injustice and efficacy were both predicted by identity, implicating a central, causal role of social identity in the determination of collective action.

Collective action is also likely when the ingroup is perceived to be under threat. Indeed, the existence of a strong motive for a positive and distinct social identity suggests that when our identities are threatened, group members are likely to react by defending the ingroup. However, group threat doesn’t always lead to action against the source of the threat. Indeed, at times, group members may shy away from the ingroup in order to alleviate the aversive feelings associated with the threat. In an effort to synthesize this literature, Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1999) summarized four types of social identity threat, and outline the effects they tend to elicit.

*Categorization threats* include being categorized against your will, such as when one is negatively stereotyped, or being categorized in terms of group characteristics where one may instead wish to be perceived and judged on an individual basis (e.g., during a job interview) or in terms of another social membership. This is most likely to be perceived as a threat by those who do not identify much with that stereotyped group, and should especially have negative consequences when the group is low in status. The effects of this threat, according to Branscombe et al. (1999), include disidentification with the group, distress in the form of anger or depression, or lowered self-esteem.

Group members are motivated to differentiate the ingroup from other salient groups in order to achieve a positively distinct social identity. A threat to *distinctiveness* refers to contexts in which the boundaries between the ingroup and a relevant outgroup are perceived to be blurred. High-identifiers in particular, according to Branscombe et al. (1999), are more likely to respond to threats to their group's distinctiveness, and will accordingly try to differentiate their group from a group that is perceived to be too similar. If differentiation is achieved, intergroup relations may flourish, although there is a tendency to engage in outgroup derogation in order to facilitate differentiation. Thus, while the end product of the differentiation process may be beneficial for intergroup relations, the road to this end may be fraught with intergroup tension.

Threats to the *value* of social identity, obtained through comparison between the ingroup and an outgroup, make up some of the original postulates of SIT (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These threats might include negative comments or outright derogation directed towards the ingroup. Branscombe et al. (1999) elaborate on this type of threat, which can originate from the outgroup, or even members of the ingroup. In addition to evoking more subtle, defensive responses, threats from the outgroup have been shown to increase identification with the ingroup. Among high-identifiers, these threats might decrease collective self-esteem and result in outgroup derogation: according to Branscombe et al. (1999), "for those who value the identity in question, derogation of the threatening outgroup can serve collective self-esteem restoration purposes" (p. 48).

Finally, individuals may experience threats involving *acceptance* from their own group members. Such a threat might be experienced when a new member joins a group, or when a group excludes an existing group member. When newcomers feel uncertain about their acceptance in a group, and wish to be accepted, it is predicted that they will display to other group members prototypical behaviours associated with that group. This might include extreme actions such as violence, in cases where this behaviour is prototypical (e.g., for membership in a street gang). Insecure group members should also display outgroup derogation, to the extent that this behaviour is normative and can be observed by other group members.

Threats to acceptance that occur in groups in which an individual is already a member might involve uncertainty as to whether an individual will be perceived as a "good" or "typical" group member. While such a threat should not influence the behaviours of low-identifiers to a great extent, high-identifiers should act in a similar manner to uncertain newcomers, namely displaying outgroup derogation and prototypical behaviours.

In sum, the maintenance of a positive and distinct social identity is an important determinant of any decision to take action on behalf of one's group. When these identities are threatened, actions crucial to the success of intergroup relations may be taken: most significantly, intergroup hostility may increase, leading to fraught relations, and even conflict, between groups.

#### 4.1.5 Theoretical Derivatives of SIT

SIT, as it has been described here, has evolved to such an extent that it is now considered a theoretical framework, guiding an extensive amount of research on group behaviour. Now sometimes referred to as the social identity *approach* (Abrams & Hogg, 2004), research on social identities has spawned several other theories, notably Self-categorization Theory (e.g., Turner et al., 1987), the five-stage model of intergroup relations (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984), and the Theory of Self (e.g., Taylor & Louis, 2004). As each of these three theories may inform a better understanding of an individual's path towards becoming a member or supporter of an ANSA, they are discussed next.

##### 4.1.5.1 Self-Categorization Theory

Self-categorization Theory (SCT) (e.g., Turner et al., 1987) lays out the premises of SIT at the cognitive level, further elaborating on categorization and other psychological processes related to identity. Although rooted in SIT, it is a distinct offshoot of the theory, “a more general account of the self and group processes than SIT was ever intended to be” (Turner & Reynolds, 2010, p. 19). While SIT focused on macro-social processes, often geared towards the understanding of disadvantaged groups, SCT generalizes its account to basic human processes.

Self-categories, which refer to “cognitive groupings of self and some class of stimuli” (Turner et al., 1994), include personal and social identities. While personal identities are self-categories which “define the individual as a unique person in terms of his or her individual differences from other (ingroup) persons”, social identities are “self-categories that define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories” (Turner et al., 1994, p. 454).

Individuals self-categorize when groups or categories become salient; this, in turn, occurs alongside a process referred to as *depersonalization* (Turner et al., 1994). As social identities become salient, this depersonalization of group members transforms one's self-concept, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and behaviour towards a prototype (Hogg & Williams, 2000), leading individuals to view themselves in terms of their group membership. Prototypes are defined as “specific fuzzy sets that define and prescribe attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that characterize one group and distinguish it from other groups” (Hogg & Williams, 2000, p. 88). According to self-categorization theorists, depersonalization is the main process responsible for social identity and group behaviour.

Salience of social categories or identities is dependent on the accessibility and fit of these categories. “Accessibility” generally refers to the ease with which a category can be retrieved from memory or based on contextual cues (Hogg & Williams, 2000). The “fit” of a category can be analyzed in two ways. *Comparative fit* refers to the principle of metacontrast: broadly speaking, this principle states that similarity between certain individuals versus the comparison between those individuals and others will foster the categorization of those individuals into a group. *Normative fit* refers to the content of categorization, such as the beliefs, attitudes, and actions, which individuals must share to a certain degree to be categorized as a group. Self-categorization involves an interaction between comparative and normative fit, as well as between fit and accessibility (Turner et al., 1994, p. 455; see Hogg & Williams, 2000 for an elaboration of what factors interact to contribute to self-categorization).

##### 4.1.5.2 The Five-Stage Model of Intergroup Relations

A model that was inspired by the early insights of social identity theorists, proposed by Taylor and McKirnan (1984), may provide some understanding of certain critical processes involved in the

evolution of ANSAs. The model focuses on members of disadvantaged groups and how they might set about to achieve a positive and distinct social identity. The model proposes that the first action taken by members of a disadvantaged group is individualistic in nature. Specifically, disadvantaged group members will attempt upward mobility into a more advantaged group that will provide them with a more positive social identity.

Not all disadvantaged groups will attempt to be upwardly mobile. Rather, it is the more talented members of the disadvantaged group who will engage the mobility process, believing that they can be successful. Those who do actually succeed will embrace their new advantaged group membership with great enthusiasm. But what of those who are unsuccessful in their mobility attempts? Those whose individual attempt at upward mobility fails have little recourse but to return to their disadvantaged group.

These talented disadvantaged group members who have engaged an individual, upward mobility strategy to improve their identity, now shift their focus from individual concern to group concern. Specifically, they first attribute their upward mobility failure to the prejudiced and discriminatory practices of the advantaged group. Second, they realize that the only hope of improving their identity is by elevating the status of their entire disadvantaged group.

Thus according to the model, talented members of the disadvantaged group who have been rebuffed by the advantaged group turn their attention to consciousness raising. That is, they set about to convince all members of the disadvantaged group that they are victims of discrimination and therefore must rise up and challenge the advantaged group. This consciousness raising process may be crucial for the development of ANSAs. These talented disadvantaged group members are rebuffed, angry leaders who are essentially rallying disadvantaged group members to collective action. These consciousness raisers, then, are critical players and any strategy to meet their needs so as to remove their motivation for consciousness raising may be useful in combating the growth of ANSAs.

The five-stage model proposed by Taylor and McKirnan (1984), inspired by the early insights of social identity theorists, may provide some understanding of certain critical processes involved in the evolution of ANSAs. The model focuses on members of disadvantaged groups and how they might set about achieving a positive and distinct social identity. The model proposes that the first action taken by members of a disadvantaged group is individualistic in nature. Specifically, individual disadvantaged group members attempt upward mobility. Thus, the five-stage model (see Figure 3, next page) departs from SIT by specifying that not all disadvantaged groups will attempt to be upwardly mobile. Rather, it is the more talented members of the disadvantaged group who will engage the mobility process, believing that they can be successful. Those who do actually succeed will embrace their new advantaged group membership. Alternatively, those whose individual attempt at upward mobility fails have little recourse but to return to their disadvantaged group. Here, these elites attempt to instigate collective action in order to decrease the power differential between their own group and the advantaged group.

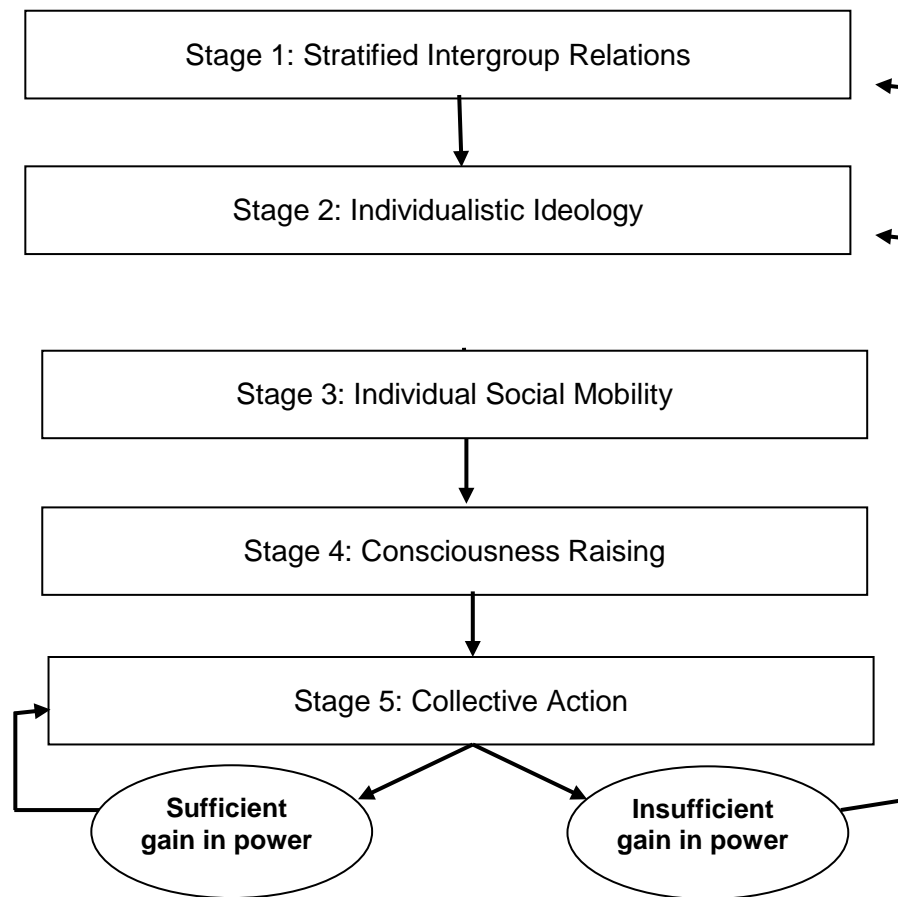


Figure 3: Five-Stage Model (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984)

#### 4.1.5.3 A Theory of Self: The Primacy of Cultural Identity

One theoretical development focuses on identity as an essential component of an individual’s self-concept. This theory of the self (see Taylor, 1997; 2002; Taylor & Louis, 2004) has universal application, but might be usefully applied to understanding the recruitment of ANSA members and supporters. Specifically, this theory of the self emphasizes collective identity to define the circumstances that favour recruitment.

##### 4.1.5.3.1 Four Components to the Self

Emphasis is placed on the self-concept because it is believed to be central for understanding human behaviour. The self-concept is multidimensional, but two fundamental distinctions are central to the present analysis. The first important distinction contrasts identity and esteem. The identity component is the one that describes “who I am”. In contrast, the esteem component focuses on my evaluation of myself and answers the question “am I worthy?”

A second fundamental distinction that needs to be made is between an individual’s personal self and their collective self. The personal self refers to those characteristics or attributes that an individual believes are unique to them. When a person describes him or her self as intelligent, shy, and loyal, that person is defining the constellation of attributes that make them unique. But, the

same person might also describe himself as a young Muslim man. These are aspects of the individual's collective identity in that they refer to attributes that the individual shares with other members of the categories young, Muslim, and man.

Crossing the two key dimensions of the self, identity vs esteem and personal vs collective, results in four distinct components to the self. These four components to the self are not theoretically novel. The literature on the self has long distinguished between identity, knowledge, and cognition on the one hand and evaluation, emotion and esteem on the other. As well, social identity theorists deserve credit for introducing the role of collective identity for understanding the self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Traditionally "self" theorists focused exclusively on personal attributes of the self, and it was social identity theorists who pointed to the fact that membership in social categories also contributes to an individual's self concept.

#### **4.1.5.3.2 The Primacy of Collective Identity**

Where the present theory of the self departs from tradition is in terms of the role played by each of the four components. Taylor (1997; 2002) argues that while each of the four components plays a pivotal role for a healthy self and well-being, certain components have psychological precedence. Specifically, it is argued that collective identity has psychological priority over the other three components, and in turn, personal identity has precedence over personal (self-) esteem.

Why is collective identity so critical? Collective identity is a description of the group to which the individual belongs and as such serves as the normative backdrop against which the individual can articulate his or her unique attributes. In short, without a clearly defined collective identity, an individual cannot engage in comparisons that would allow them to develop a personal identity. In this sense, collective identity carries primary importance for adequate identity construction.

By extension, it would be impossible for an individual to develop personal esteem without the benefit of a clearly defined personal identity. Personal esteem is a form of self-evaluation that requires a concrete basis for engaging the evaluative process. An individual must know who they are – must know their own unique attributes – in order to arrive at an evaluation of the self. In this sense, personal identity is a necessary prerequisite to form personal esteem.

Each of us has a number of collective identities, as many as the groups we belong to and share characteristics with. These collective identities will range from our ethnic and gender groups to our work and leisure groups. But one of these, Taylor (1997) argues, has special precedence: our cultural, and in some instances, religious collective identity. Cultural and religious identities have a special status because they are identities that purport to cover every aspect of a person's life. Culture and religion are linked because they both have the potential to be all-inclusive. Devout Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians are likely to view their religion as a template for every detail in their life. Thus, culture and religion can be synonymous in terms of how pervasive they are as collective identities. This is not always the case, however; for many, religion is not an identity that is central to every aspect of their life, while their cultural identity might be inescapable. As a White "mainstream" Canadian person, for example, one could be nominally Christian and to a certain extent follow Christian tenets, but that person's North American culture is likely to be pervasive. More broadly, where a society makes a sharp distinction between religion and secular culture, or between church and state, religion and culture may not be synonymous.

The present Theory of Self makes very clear predictions in terms of psychological health and subjective well-being. For one, individuals with a clearly defined cultural/religious collective identity are predicted to develop a healthy, functioning self. That is, a clearly defined collective identity is argued to be the necessary prerequisite for engaging in the process of defining a personal identity and, by extension, personal (self-) esteem.

In every culture or religion there are likely to be some individuals who, for a variety of reasons, have not internalized a clear schema of their cultural or religious collective identity. However, there are also entire groups who struggle in a collective identity vacuum. Specifically, severely disadvantaged groups who have had their culture and religion destroyed by more powerful cultural exploitation have no clearly defined collective identity to offer their members. Such an analysis has been applied to the plight of Aboriginal people whose culture was destroyed by European incursion, and African Americans whose culture was destroyed by slavery (see Taylor, 1997; 2002). To this list, one might add cultural groups who have experienced rapid, dramatic, and unpredictable social, political and economic change. Afghans, for example, are a group situated within the context of historical upheaval and civil strife. Under such conditions, it stands to reason that the collective identities – especially at the national level – of these people are anything but clear.

#### **4.1.5.3.3 ANSAS and Collective Identity**

This Theory of Self could be aptly applied to understanding how members of certain groups may be attracted to join extremist groups. It should be noted, however, that future research will be necessary to clarify the role of collective identity in the development and maintenance of ANSAs.

In the face of social upheaval, certain individuals should be particularly vulnerable because of their confused collective identity. Young people, specifically, are often future oriented and anxious to get ahead, and are likely to be those most in need of a clear collective identity in order to define themselves, promote a positive identity, and achieve their goals. Young people who are born into disadvantage might thus experience hopelessness, and in turn not instigate political action. In the absence of leadership and without the opportunity to contemplate how to generate a new collective identity, disadvantaged young people may experience demotivation and apathy. But groups are seldom homogenous, and despite the average disadvantaged nature of the group, some group members are more advantaged than others. It is those relatively privileged members of disadvantaged groups who often emerge as leaders (see Taylor & McKirnan, 1984). From this theoretical perspective, ambitious young people are the prime candidates not only to engage in, but also to organize and lead, various types of collective action, including terrorist activities.

Non-state militant groups are likely to be a minority in their own society, and also likely to hold views which are judged to be extreme. As such, the norms prescribed by the ANSA collective identity should be highly salient for individual members, often extremely simple with little room for interpretation. Thus, ANSA members may have an ultra-clearly defined and non-negotiable collective identity. Such clarity satisfies an important psychological need for individual members of these groups and offers insights into why such an organization may be so attractive to certain members of disadvantaged groups.

This rigidity and extremism may be necessary to engage a powerful outgroup, or at the very least, attract its attention. However, it is precisely the social psychological processes that give rise to the structure of the ANSA's identity that makes them appear so fanatical in their beliefs, and might pose a problem in intergroup communication. This extremism and fanaticism might make it extremely difficult to engage ANSAs in political negotiations that involve some compromise and accommodation. Furthermore, the collective identity of ANSAs may appear so simple, extreme, and unyielding that they lose the support of the very disadvantaged group on whose behalf they are acting. For example, extremists who spearheaded the women's movement, the warriors who vowed to protect Aboriginal lands in North America, militant civil rights protagonists in the United States, and terrorist cells that advocated the political separation of Québec from Canada or the Basque region from Spain, all lost power and influence once the powerful outgroup appeared to be motivated to resolve intergroup issues.

Of final importance, this theory of the self provides direct insight into the social turmoil that permeates failing or instable regions such as Afghanistan and Somalia, and allows us to make several inferences significant to understanding ANSAs. For most people living in failing states, it can be argued that there is no clear national identity that spells out the nation's goals and the precise mechanisms for getting ahead. Therefore, an individual may search elsewhere for a collective identity to use as a framework. Sub-national identities, such as clans, tribes, and ethnicities might become more important. Similarly, supra-national identities, such as religion and ideology, may also be used. The appeal of an ANSA must be understood in this light. In Afghanistan, for example, the Taliban might draw support by providing a clearly defined set of goals and structure to society; Al Shabaab in Somalia might benefit from the same conditions. As instability continues in these regions, and elsewhere, these competing sources of collective identity must be better understood.

#### **4.1.6 Motives Associated with Social Identities**

Although there are likely multiple motives involved in constructing or maintaining an identity (e.g., Vignoles et al., 2006), the following is a review of the three main motives that have received the most attention and empirical support within the study of Social Identity and Self-categorization theory.

##### **4.1.6.1 Self-Esteem**

In its early formulations, SIT tended to interpret group identity as providing positive self-esteem (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this view, social comparisons provide a method of self-evaluation: social identities that are determined to be sufficiently positive and distinct in comparison to target groups are predicted to imbue its members with self-esteem. When disadvantaged group members, then, acknowledge the inadequacy of their own social identity and submit to majority rule, they do so at a cost to their self-esteem.

These assumptions about the role of self-esteem in directing social identity motives have been revisited. Astutely, Abrams and Hogg (1988) have argued that too much emphasis has been placed on self-esteem, which may not always be implicated or relevant in intergroup behaviour. Furthermore, the concept of 'self-esteem' is unclearly stated and too general in social psychological research, hence it is difficult to accurately test.

Despite these criticisms, there remains strong evidence to indicate esteem is at least one of several important identity motives. Fein and Spencer (1997) found that derogating a member of a stereotyped group was more likely to occur in individuals whose self-image had been threatened by negative feedback, and was least likely amongst those whose self-image had been bolstered. For those whose self-image had been threatened, this discrimination towards the stereotyped group member mediated an increase in their self-esteem. Furthermore, some of the issues concerning the conceptualization of self-esteem have been addressed by the creation of a measure for *collective self-esteem* (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Whereas the term self-esteem often referred to evaluations of one's personal identity, *collective self-esteem* measures the internalized evaluation that individuals derive from their membership in certain groups, especially when these groups are valued positively. The 16-item collective self-esteem scale is now widely used as a measure of the degree to which an individual holds a positive social identity.



#### 4.1.6.2 Distinctiveness

As individuals are predicted to seek identities that are not only positive, but also distinct, it stands to reason that a motive to be sufficiently differentiated from others plays an important role in the need to have a positive social identity. Although the theory refers to aspects of social belongingness, the positives gained from our group memberships in part derive from the uniqueness of the groups we belong to.

The interplay of belongingness and distinctiveness have been articulated by Brewer's (1991) Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, which proposes that social identities serve to address a fundamental tension between the need for similarity to others, and the need for uniqueness. Social identities are appealing because they provide a way to achieve this balance – individuals satisfy their need for similarity through group memberships, while maintaining distinctiveness through inter-group comparisons. According to Brewer, the need for both similarity and distinctiveness can be represented with an opposing process model, representing each need as an opposing force (see Figure 4). An individual can be categorized along a dimension of social distinctiveness-inclusiveness ranging from complete uniqueness to complete deindividuation. Individuals strive for an optimal level of distinctiveness, that which meets both the need for differentiation and belonging, and each extreme is hypothesized to produce discomfort.

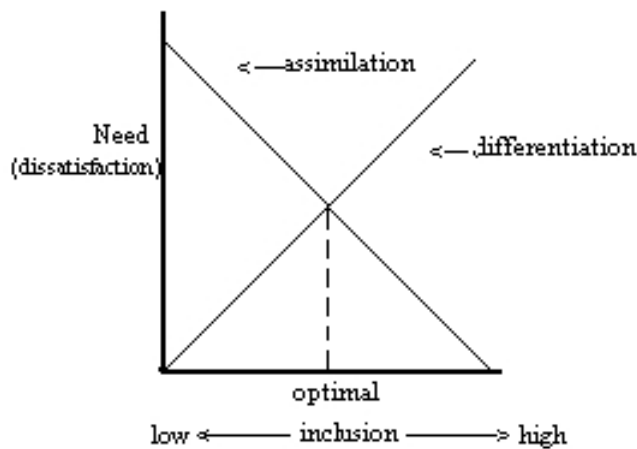


Figure 4: Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer, 1991)

Accordingly, it is predicted that minority group members will generally display higher group identity and loyalty, as they are sufficiently differentiated from other groups. Indeed, in a study on the effects of group size on valuation of one's group (Brewer, 1991), participants in the "depersonalization" condition (i.e., those who were instructed to think of themselves as members of a group rather than as individuals) showed enhanced ingroup bias when assigned to a minority group, and diminished ingroup bias when assigned to a majority group. These predictions become more complex, however, when status is taken into account: conflicts between the value of one's identity and level of distinctiveness are prone to arise. For example, high-status majority group members likely obtain benefits from their group membership, but should still "seek further differentiation into subgroups" (Brewer, 1991, p. 479). Low-status minority group members may

adopt several strategies, but often sacrifice either distinctiveness or status, unless members reject the majority criteria.

#### **4.1.6.3 Uncertainty Reduction**

Stereotyping and prejudice were described early on as a “search for coherence” (Tajfel, 1969, p. 92). By making sense of group beliefs and behaviours, it was proposed that stereotypes may serve to reduce uncertainty. Although this hypothesis fell under the radar in light of the emphasis on self-esteem, the uncertainty reduction explanation (e.g., Hogg, 2000b) has gained momentum in recent years, and has expanded into a theory referred to as Uncertainty-identity Theory (Hogg, 2007). The theory positions uncertainty as an extremely uncomfortable and motivating state. Uncertainty can be cognitively demanding – we spend our cognitive energy on reducing uncertainty in areas that are important to us, including social stimuli that are relevant to the self (Hogg et al., 2010). The theory specifies that (1) you can never completely eliminate uncertainty, only reduce it, and (2) people will sometimes behave in ways that temporarily increase uncertainty.

This motive is often described with reference to Self-categorization Theory, which argues that self-categorization serves a motive to reduce subjective uncertainty. According to this view, social influence has the ability to elicit uncertainty: we feel uncertainty when we disagree with similar others, especially group members (Hogg, 2000b): as a result, “uncertainty motivates identification with a chronically or situationally salient self-inclusive social categorization; it motivates people to affirm a social identity, form new groups, join pre-existing groups, and (re)construct prototypes to better resolve uncertainty” (p. 233).

Belonging to a group is an effective way of reducing uncertainty about the self – empirical evidence shows that people identify more strongly with groups they belong to, and join more new groups when they feel particularly uncertain about themselves (see Hogg et al., 2010). Groups will vary according to how much of an identity they provide, and consequently how much they reduce uncertainty. When experiencing uncertainty, individuals are predicted to be especially likely to identify with groups that are higher in entitativity – that is, groups which provide clearly defined, distinct entities.

Hogg, Adelman, and Blagg (2010) use the uncertainty motive to explain religion, particularly its tendency to generate extreme, sometimes cruel behaviour and beliefs. Religions are high in entitativity – they provide clear rules and boundaries, common goals and fate. Additionally, they are aimed at explaining existence, and establish a moral compass for their followers. In doing so, they provide an unambiguous identity for adherents, and greatly reduce uncertainty. People will go to great lengths, according to this view, to protect this religious vision and identity.

#### **4.1.7 Criticisms and Limitations**

According to Huddy (2001), although SIT is the most promising theoretical approach from which to study identity, its current value is limited by several issues. On the whole, the study of political behaviour is constrained because SIT is not studied sufficiently in a real-world context, where identities are “complicated by history and culture” (p. 129). Furthermore, some “real-world” results seem to contradict the predictions of SIT (e.g., the identification of ethnic minorities). SIT researchers, she argues, have ignored the subjectivity, variability, and meaning of identity, and instead focused on minimal group boundaries and simple group membership.

Huddy (2001) identifies four main issues that plague social identity research. The first concerns a neglected understanding of *identity strength*. Most studies, argues Huddy (2001), examine very weak, minimal lab-contingent identities, or else very strong identities: “It is important to understand what turns a weak or nonexistent identity into something that can motivate ethnic hatred” (p. 137), a goal that is difficult to achieve by studying only the rare, categorical cases of group identification. Understanding how and why some identities become strong is especially important for studying national and/or religious identities that can lead to collective action and intergroup conflict.

Another issue in social identity research refers to identity choice. Identities can, in some cases, be acquired by choice. This is especially true in modern times: the “ability to recreate and refashion one’s identity many times over is arguably at its extreme in contemporary American society, characterized by its high levels of residential mobility, second careers, and high divorce rates” (Huddy, 2001, p. 137). Choice of identity is a “common feature of social identities outside the laboratory” (Huddy, 2001, p. 138) and may be especially relevant for immigrants, and people who hold multiple ethnic or racial identities. Perreault and Bourhis (1999), for example, provide evidence that voluntary group membership increases identification, and that strong identification increased discriminatory behaviour against an outgroup.

Another aspect of social identities in need of explication is the study of *individual differences* in identity acquisition. Huddy (2001) reasons that “the notion that social identities are more often acquired than ascribed hints at the importance of individual differences in the process of identity acquisition, an issue that has been largely ignored by social identity researchers” (p. 139). Individuals may differ according to how many groups they use to define themselves, or may reject group memberships entirely. Personality variables may also interact with identity, and thus contribute to a more holistic and realistic explanation of collective action. Although some studies have examined individual-level variables, such as personality traits (Perrault & Bourhis, 1999), more studies are needed.

Finally, *group differences* are an evident feature of social identities that has also been ignored. Groups differ on such domains as permeability, visibility, and permanency, as well as clarity of group membership. The meaning of these differences for social identity is mostly unexplored. According to Huddy (2001), “the meaning of a group identity may also shed light on the differing consequence of group identity for group members’ behaviour, attitudes, and values” (p. 150). Like Huddy, Hogg and Williams (2000) also focus on the criticism that SIT treats all groups as the same, neglecting highly important differences. More recent uses of the social identity approach, especially Self-categorization Theory and the uses of minimal group paradigms in research, have been criticized as tending towards reductionism (see Hogg & Williams, 2000; Reicher, 2004) or for being too cognitive and simplistic (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Ironically, these are the very issues that original SIT theorists aimed to avoid. However, Hogg and Williams (2000) note that self-categorization is part of the wider approach of social identity: they contend that “the content and form of expression of the collective self can be properly understood only by relating individual cognitive-motivational processes to the nature of the groups involved and the historical nature of their relations to one another – the wider intergroup context” (p. 90).

Considering the criticisms levelled at SIT, one promising area of research is noteworthy: the study of collective narratives. By taking into account the construction and fluidity of real-world social identities across time, collective narratives are receiving attention as a powerful element influencing not only identity, but also the political actions and responses of social groups (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Broadly speaking, collective narratives refer to an individual’s internalized representation of their group’s “story” (Ashmore et al., 2004). These narratives emerge from a group’s representation of its own history; according to Liu and Hilton (2005), “a group’s

representation of its history will condition its sense of what it was, is, can and should be, and is thus central to the construction of its identity, norms, and values” (p. 537). Social representations of history are widely consensual within a given group. Their meaning and relevance to modern events, however, can be more highly disputed.

An examination of the emergence and features of specific narratives held by groups can inform knowledge of group members’ beliefs and behaviours. Because of this, the narratives disseminated by jihadi terrorists and their supporters have recently received a great deal of attention by security experts (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2007; Kilcullen, 2006; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2009). The potential of collective narratives to better understand ANSAs is discussed in more detail in Section 5.

#### **4.1.8 Conclusion**

Of interest to social psychologists, identity has featured prominently in current historical and political events. For one, the growing power of extreme religious interpretations may be contingent on identity issues. The initial appeal of revolutionary Islamic movements such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Islamic Courts Union in Somalia have been suggested to be due, in part, to “their ability to redefine local and national identities in such a way that overcame pre-existing fault lines of conflict” (Ahmad, 2009). Afghanistan, in particular, was reeling from a corrupt civil war, beginning in 1992, prior to the rise of the Taliban. Within a fragmented, ethnically diverse and divided country, Islamic reform headed by the Taliban gained crucial initial support because it “demonstrated a unique ability to create a unified national identity based on religion” (Ahmad, 2009). Ahmad writes that:

“Interviews with women in northern Afghanistan from a plethora of ethnic backgrounds (including those with very anti-Taliban sentiments) confirm that the central preoccupation of the Taliban was "Muslim or non-Muslim," not "Pashtun or Tajik or Uzbek." [7] The Taliban's message of Islamic reform meant that they categorically rejected all of the mujahidin leaders of the old guard, regardless of ethnic identity.”

While the Taliban has since lost support, this appeal to a national identity enabled it to maintain a stronghold in the previously divided Pashtun regions of the south (Ahmad, 2009); this stronghold was significant to the long-term success of the Taliban.

In a globalized yet increasingly divided world, identity will likely be a major component in the development and resolution of conflict between nations, ethnicities, and religious groups. At this point, SIT is the most complete, influential, and ubiquitous approach to understanding group conflict. As such, it provides a detailed scientific framework to guide the investigation of psychological antecedents of conflict.

## **4.2 Group-Based Emotions**

People like to have a Cartesian approach to life – reasoning and responses are purely logical and emotions are purely disruptive. However, emotions are known to have a powerful effect on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour. Indeed, emotions affect the way that we reason and respond in a variety of personal and social contexts (Clore et al., 1994; Morris & Keltner, 2000). Approaches to the study of emotion and the resultant social decision-making have ranged from broad theoretical models of emotion (see Solomon et al., 1991) to empirical investigations of specific

emotions (Mackie et al., 2000). Indeed, dozens of different theories have been developed to explain what causes emotion and how emotions work to influence behaviour. Yet, they emerge from very different theoretical perspectives and assume that different elements are important to the process of feeling an emotion and its consequences (see Moors, 2009). Given these differences, some of the theoretical approaches that have elicited the most attention are briefly described below.

#### **4.2.1 Economic Understandings**

Within the field of economics there has been a long tradition (Smith, 1759, to Frank, 1988) of submitting that emotions operate as mechanisms for sustaining subjective commitments to strategies that run counter to speciously attractive immediate rewards. That is, if the self wants to engage in a particular behaviour that is perceived to be rewarding (e.g., standing as the victor over a rival) the simplest manner to counter the pull toward that behaviour is through emotions that negate the attraction of the reward (e.g., guilt). As such, emotions can have a strong influence on social decision-making. Of course, other emotions (e.g., anger) might have the consequence of pulling people away from pro-social behaviours and toward the anti-social end of the social decision-making spectrum in order to achieve immediate goals (e.g., making the rival pay). It is thus not unreasonable to suggest that emotions might play a significant role in understanding the decision-making of ANSAs. Insofar as members and supporters of ANSAs experience specific emotions it may pull or push them toward their engagement in specific actions.

#### **4.2.2 Social Cognition, Domain-Specific Emotions, and Decision Making**

Social cognition is the study of how people process social information, especially its encoding, storage, retrieval, and application to social situations. Within the context of emotion, social cognition research has traditionally focused on the proximate mechanisms through which valenced mood states (positive and negative affect) influence decision making. (A second contract team in support of TIF Project 10ad08 carried out a comprehensive review of the scientific literature exploring the key antecedents to ANSA decision making, as well as individual, group and contextual factors, in addition to those discussed in this section and elsewhere in this report, that may moderate the processes in which decisions are made. See Salas et al. 2010.) Recently, however, a number of researchers have highlighted the benefits of moving beyond the study of valence to look at the influence of specific emotional states on decision-making (Van Kleef et al., 2004; Lerner & Keltner, 2001).

One emotion that has received particular attention is that of fear. Perhaps this is because we live in a world that is dotted with an abundance of lethal threats. Ironically however, the vast majority of the lethal threats we encounter on a daily basis are routinely ignored. For example, a commute to and from work exposes people to an array of objects and contexts that should leave us incapacitated with fear – a speeding car could run us down, a button press could leave us with an electrical shock that could kill, merely walking around a downtown core could lead to so much pollution ingestion that cancer should be viewed as a norm and not an unfortunate occurrence, and an insect bite could leave us with an array of ailments from lime disease to the swine flu. Yet, we do not seem to treat all these sources of fear equally. Although speeding cars can kill us in an instant, people are by-in-large not fazed by their presence. However, a single hornet might cause an entire picnic to be abandoned. The point herein is to highlight the role of social cognition. Specifically, linear cause-effect logic is not helpful when trying to understand why actions are taken. Simply because objective criteria would suggest action is necessary to protect the self does not necessarily imply that action will be taken. Conversely, although a person or context might objectively suggest that threat is not present, action might nonetheless be initiated. To the point, subjective appraisals are paramount when attempting to understand why actors act.

Indeed, the absence of fear responses to all objective threats suggests that emotional responses are not simply the product of rational deliberation. Within the context of evolutionary psychology, fear results from domain-specific mechanisms that correspond to harms encountered by our ancestors (e.g., potential for bodily harm, extreme heights, social evaluation, and the risk of social exclusion; Nesse, 1990; Seligman, 1971; Williams, 2007). Thus, although most people will rarely (if ever) happen across a snake during their lifetime, the actual or perceived presence of a snake tends to arouse considerable fear. Those who are not fearful of snakes can easily be conditioned to experience intense fear. By contrast, it is difficult to condition fear to other stimuli, even those with strong semantic associations with shock (e.g., damaged electrical outlets; see Ohman & Mineka, 2003 for a review). According to this understanding, the experience of fear is based on evolutionary processes that are filtered through our understanding of the social situation. Thus, whether or not someone is willing to take up arms may depend, in part, on how the person appraised the social situation and the historical/evolutionary significance of that situation.

Cannon (1932) offered some of the earliest research on fear, stress, and behaviour in his work on the “fight-or-flight” response. According to Cannon, when an organism experiences or perceives a threat, it reacts instantly by releasing hormones that help it to survive. In human beings and other animals, these hormones allow for greater speed and strength. Heart rate and blood pressure increase, delivering more oxygen and blood sugar to support major muscles. Sweating increases to better cool the muscles and allowing them to remain efficient. Blood is regulated to reduce blood loss if there is any damage. Hormones focus our attention on the threat, to the exclusion of everything else. All of this commands a heightened ability to survive life-threatening or perceived life-threatening events. Moreover, when instigated, people become more willing to engage in aggressive action.

Like fear, other emotions have a direct impact on our decisions and behaviour. Indeed, from the domain-specific approach to emotions, unique emotions have distinguishable influences on decision-making. Anger and disgust, for example, are similar in valence (both negative), but have very different effects on decision-making and subsequent behaviour (see Fessler et al., 2004). Anger is a response to experiencing a transgression and attempting to deter it through action against the source. Disgust, in contrast, is a response to a potential contaminant and it motivates distancing from the source. It follows that these two negative emotions should have very different effects on risk taking: anger should increase it and disgust should decrease it (see Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001). Disgust with the attitudes and behaviours of the enemy is unlikely to be a fruitful emotion in the recruitment of ANSA members or their motivation to execute action against the enemy. Conversely, harnessing and instilling anger may not only help recruit ANSA members, but might be central in their willingness to engage in behaviours that put the self at risk to engage the enemy.

Akin to anger and disgust, feeling fear and worry are both unpleasant, as is anxiety. Thus, these emotions can be included in this general “family” of emotion, characterized by feelings of apprehension in situations that are perceived to be threatening (Baumeister et al., 1996). Most theorists, however, agree that anxiety can be distinguished from fear, which as mentioned above is characterized by an immediate surge in arousal and an activation of the fight-or-flight response when confronted with a threatening situation (Gray, 1982). Anxiety, by contrast, is typically less intense and stems from a sense of *uncertainty*, concern for what *might happen in the future*, and lack of predictability. The uncertainty that results in anxiety is *future oriented* in that it is attuned to *prospective* threats, dangers, or other possible negative events (Barlow, 1991). Anxiety is often non-specific in terms of the when, what and how a terrible thing might befall the self, coupled with certainty that it will happen eventually. This form of anxiety is often termed “angst,” where the individual exhibits self-focused worry concerning perceived possible threat-related outcomes

(see Barlow, 1988; Rank, 1914; Sartre, 1956). Thus, while fear and anger are likely to influence decision making by initiating immediate action, anxiety is likely to initiate more calculated responses, i.e., problem-focused coping responses that may or may not include the perceived need for aggressive action. The factors that might lead the anxious individual to engage in aggressive acts will be addressed later in this paper.

### **4.2.3 Terror Management, Worldview Defence, and Violence**

Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski (1991) explain the prevalence of prejudice and aggression toward those who are different to be a consequence of anxiety about our own mortality. Specifically, inspired by the writings of Ernest Becker (1971; 1973), Terror Management Theory (TMT) posits that like other animals, humans possess a life instinct, a drive for a continued and prosperous existence. However, the human animal also possesses the unique knowledge of its own existence and thus its inevitable demise. This pairing creates the potential for a tremendous amount of anxiety that can render ongoing goal-directed behaviour difficult if not impossible.

In order to function with relative equanimity, humans were compelled to find methods to keep their existential anxiety at bay. According to TMT, humans accomplished this end via the development and maintenance of an existential anxiety buffer that is embodied within the cultural worldview of groups. The cultural worldview is a codified belief system that informs people within a given culture about the nature of reality – why we are here, what we should do while we are here, and what happens to us when we die. Specifically, a cultural worldview gives people a sense that life is meaningful by providing standards for how to achieve a personal sense of significance.

TMT posits that cultural worldviews also provide some promise of death transcendence that can be either literal (e.g., going to heaven) or symbolic (e.g., books, artwork, children) for those who abide by cultural values. Because of the vital role these psychological structures play in managing existential terror, a great deal of individual and social behaviour is aimed at their maintenance and defence. Thus, in the presence of people who possess a different understanding of the world, i.e., a different worldview, our existential anxiety buffer becomes threatened. This is because the presence of another's worldview calls one's own understanding of the world and one's place in that world into question. In order to quell this anxiety people are willing to take aggressive action to ensure one's own worldview stands as the conqueror of the other.

In experimental demonstrations of the consequence of worldview threats, researchers have used the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon as a worldview threat to determine whether Americans have become more willing to engage in aggressive acts of reprisal. In such research, video of the fall of the World Trade Center towers on September 11<sup>th</sup> has been shown to evoke strong aggressive enduring emotional responses among the American public (e.g., Chamberlain, 2009). For example, Sadler, Lineberger, Correll, and Park (2005) showed that participants whose emotional reactions were dominated by anger endorsed an aggressive military response and rejected humanitarian efforts. Participants whose emotional reactions were dominated by sadness and fear expressed reservations about a strong military reaction. Generalizing from these results, it is likely that emotions such as anxiety and anger which stem from threats to their cultural worldview may be at the core of ANSAs' engagement in aggressive actions against the culture or intra-cultural competitor(s) that is, for them, the source of the threat.

Indeed, TMT argues that the motivation to act violently against an enemy stems from threats to ideology, belief system, and values. The violence serves to protect against the anxiety that results from death awareness and by extension threats to one's worldview. That said, willingness to engage in armed conflict may be restricted to cases in which perceived threats to one's worldview

are paired with a belief that the enemy has hostile intentions, yet one's personal vulnerability to attack is low (Hirschberger et al., 2009). That is, people are more likely to join or support an ANSA to the extent that they believe (1) their worldview is under threat, (2) the source of the threat is perceived as having hostile intentions, and (3) firsthand experience with war is minimal.

One interesting difference between how TMT is studied in other domains and how it is studied in terrorism research has to do with the mortality salience prime itself. Generally, participants are instructed to write a passage imagining their own death (using a description of their experiences of pain at the dentist as a control), but in terrorism research, the prime is often terrorism itself: photos or videos of 9/11, or other terrorist attacks. Renkema et al. (2008) argue that this different mortality salience prime might in fact activate different goals than a general reminder of death. A prime of one's own death is based on an abstract, existential threat of death whereas a terrorism prime evokes a threat from a specific group. Their findings suggest that the general death prime activates a comprehension goal (trying to make sense of their environment), but terrorism primes activate an enhancement goal (a specific threatening "other" leads to feelings that one needs to self-enhance). Landau et al. (2004) discovered that both a regular mortality salience prime as well as one about 9/11 led to increased support for President Bush and his counterterrorism policies but decreased support for then candidate John Kerry. The authors contend that the mortality salience primes left people receptive to a charismatic leadership style that naturally connotes symbolic protection from harm

#### **4.2.4 Intergroup Emotions**

Although contexts have the ability to elicit specific emotions that drive behaviour, in line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the groups to which people belong can also elicit emotions, which in turn drive behaviour. That is, certain emotional reactions can be dictated by the specific group membership triggered by the appraisal of its relevance to a situation or event (Seger et al., 2009). For example, transgressions that violate people's sense of fairness, autonomy, and justice – a combination of values that are highly regarded in American society (Darley & Pittman, 2003) – can arouse these "appropriate" group-level emotions in people, leading to a call for retribution. At the extreme, group members might be willing to act on their own accord, with violent means, in order to protect their group from perceived threat and defend the group during intergroup conflict.

However, akin to the interpersonal domain, understanding intergroup conflict has traditionally been approached as if it is solely or primarily a rational problem. If a state is failing, the root cause can be systematically examined, problem-solving can be initiated, and solutions can be implemented. If the methodology is sound, then corrections can be made to move the state toward peace and prosperity. This has resulted in a distorted view of intra- and intergroup relations that is unbalanced by its neglect of emotion (Pettigrew, 1997).

When emotions were mentioned within the context of intergroup relations generally and conflict more specifically, they were regarded as something to be managed or suppressed or vented before pro-social relations could manifest. Furthermore, any discussion about emotions was often limited to an emphasis on how anger caused conflict escalation and how to control it. It was assumed that anger was a natural outcome of the tendency to hold the ingroup in positive regard ("ingroup love") and to disparage the outgroup ("outgroup hate") (see Brewer, 1999). As such, researchers tended to treat them as opposites of each other as opposed to distinct dimensions. We now know that in-group favouritism and outgroup derogation are separate components and an understanding of intergroup tension requires an independent assessment of ingroup and outgroup evaluations (Bettencourt & Dorr 1998; Islam & Hewstone 1993).



Because outgroup hate is not a polar opposite to ingroup love (i.e., ingroup positivity and enhancement), when does the attachment and drive to achieve and maintain a positive social identity give way to prejudice, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, intolerance, and aggression? In recent years, theorists have begun to see that the constraints normally in place, which limit intergroup bias to ingroup favouritism, are lifted when the presence of an outgroup is associated with stronger emotions (Smith, 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Wohl et al., 2006). There is ample scope for these emotions in the arousal that often characterizes intergroup encounters, which can be translated into emotions such as fear, hatred, or disgust (Smith 1993, Stephan & Stephan 2000), and emotions experienced in specific encounters with groups can be important causes of people's overall reactions to groups and that threat (discussed below) is one factor that triggers these emotions.

Intuitively, emotions should significantly influence how people deal with others. Anyone who has found themselves in an argument with their spouse or has been demeaned and humiliated by a co-worker will, no doubt, recognize the feelings of anger and rage that directly led to behaviours that would not have even been contemplated in a cooler emotional state. Conversely, it is important to note that conflicts can also arise precisely because parties ignore their own or others' feelings and emotions. Emotions can thus be categorized as both a cause and escalator of conflict, and positive feelings among the parties are often a key component of resolution. Once one accepts that emotion is foundational, the issue of how emotion influences the management of conflict becomes central. Many theorists (e.g., Smith, 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Wohl et al., 2006) have begun to point out that the lack of detailed attention paid to emotions and their role in relationships limits our understanding of conflict and that more work needs to be done to remedy this.

In response, over the past decade, the inattention paid to emotion has been addressed through an explosion of research on people's emotional reactions to intra- and intergroup contexts. Specifically, social scientists have come to understand that people may experience emotional reactions about the ingroup, about the outgroup, and about the relations between the two. Akin to emotions that emanate from contexts that directly impact the personal self, the social self can experience a wide swath of emotions, known collectively as group-based emotions, which stem from group-relevant events.

Importantly, the emotions experienced by personal and social contexts are distinguishable. For example, collective guilt might be experienced for the illegitimate harm the ingroup perpetrated against an outgroup in the absence of personal guilt (Wohl et al., 2006). Because such an emotion is group-based, its experience is often dependent on, among other things, the extent to which the individual identifies with the group in question. Finally, group-based emotions are quite diverse, highly complex, yet remarkably specific in their consequence. Specific group-based emotions tend to elicit specific behaviours (Mackie et al., 2000). With that said, how an individual responds to a group-relevant event will depend on the specific emotion experienced. Thus, emotional reaction to a group-relevant event is the cornerstone of action.

In the following sections, we outline theories that have addressed the antecedents and consequences of group-based emotions as well as identify particular emotions that might be implicated in attitudes toward conflict in failing states as well as willingness to support and engage in action that is believed to strengthen and protect the ingroup against those who are deemed to have adversarial intent. Specifically, we outline two perspectives – Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 1996) and Intergroup Emotions Theory (Mackie et al., 2000; Smith, 1993, 1999) – that view group behaviour as predominantly an affective phenomenon. Specifically, both view emotion as a consequence of the appraisal of an intergroup dynamic, with the former focusing particularly on the appraisal of group threat posed by those who are not

ingroup members. However, both perspectives acknowledge that these appraisals are subject to a number of contextual factors. We examine these dynamic models that introduce affect as a potential source of situational variability, while exploring the behavioural consequences of group-based emotions.

#### **4.2.4.1 Integrated Threat Theory**

Central to any discussion of group-based emotions is an appraisal of intergroup threat. When members of a group feel threatened, the effect can be increased intolerance, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and xenophobia, regardless of whether the threat is defined as a widely acknowledged external force or a subjective, perceived state. For example, prejudice is often the result of real or perceived threat to the ingroup's resources or status (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Levine & Campbell, 1972; Struch & Schwartz, 1989).

Threat not only promotes intolerance, but tends to lead to support for aggressive action against threatening groups. For example, under conditions of threat (perceived risk of terrorism), Americans show heightened support for President Bush and American military action in Iraq (Landau et al., 2004). Likewise, Israelis are more likely to support military power over peace negotiations when Israelis believe their country faces serious threats from neighboring Arab countries (Arian, 1989).

In response to threat, members of the ingroup may show signs of ingroup solidarity or cohesion as well as biases against outgroup members (Giles & Evans, 1985; Grant & Brown, 1995). According to Brewer (1999), increased group cohesion occurs because ingroup norms develop in active opposition to the threatening other group. Turner, Hogg, Turner, and Smith (1984), for example, found that group cohesion increased when group members perceived that a threat was directed at the group as a whole (as opposed to individual group members or subgroups). These findings point to a ubiquitous negative effect of external threat on intergroup behavior. When group members feel threatened there is a tendency to take action to protect the ingroup from potential harm.

When examining contemporary work on this front, Integrated Threat Theory (ITT) (Stephan & Stephan, 1996) remains particularly influential. According to this theory, anxiety is often experienced prior to real or anticipated interactions with people who are not afforded ingroup status. That is, people feel discomfort around (or in anticipation of being around) outgroup members. This anxiety is the consequence of a threat appraisal that has the downstream effect of prejudice and discrimination directed toward an outgroup that is perceived to be a threat (Stephan & Stephan, 1993).

Importantly, ITT posits that perceptions of threat can be categorized into four kinds: realistic threat, symbolic threat, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. Stemming from realistic conflict theories (LeVine & Campbell, 1976; Sherif, 1966), realistic threat refers to threats to the political, economic, and physical well being of the ingroup (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). For example, Israelis may experience threat if it is believed that their surrounding Arab neighbours wish to drive them into the sea. Related to realistic threat is the experience of symbolic threat. The root of symbolic threat, however, is a perceived desire by non-ingroup members to undermine the ingroup's "way of life" or worldview. Such a threat generally arises when a salient outgroup possesses different values, customs, standards, and beliefs (Stephan & Stephan, 1996), which either implicitly challenge ingroup norms or are explicitly imposed on the ingroup. Note, symbolic threat can also stem from factions within the group that aim to change the ingroup's status quo. For example, symbolic threat might be experienced by Muslims in countries that are perceived to be drifting toward a more radical interpretation of Islam. In such a context, group members might feel their way of life is under attack.

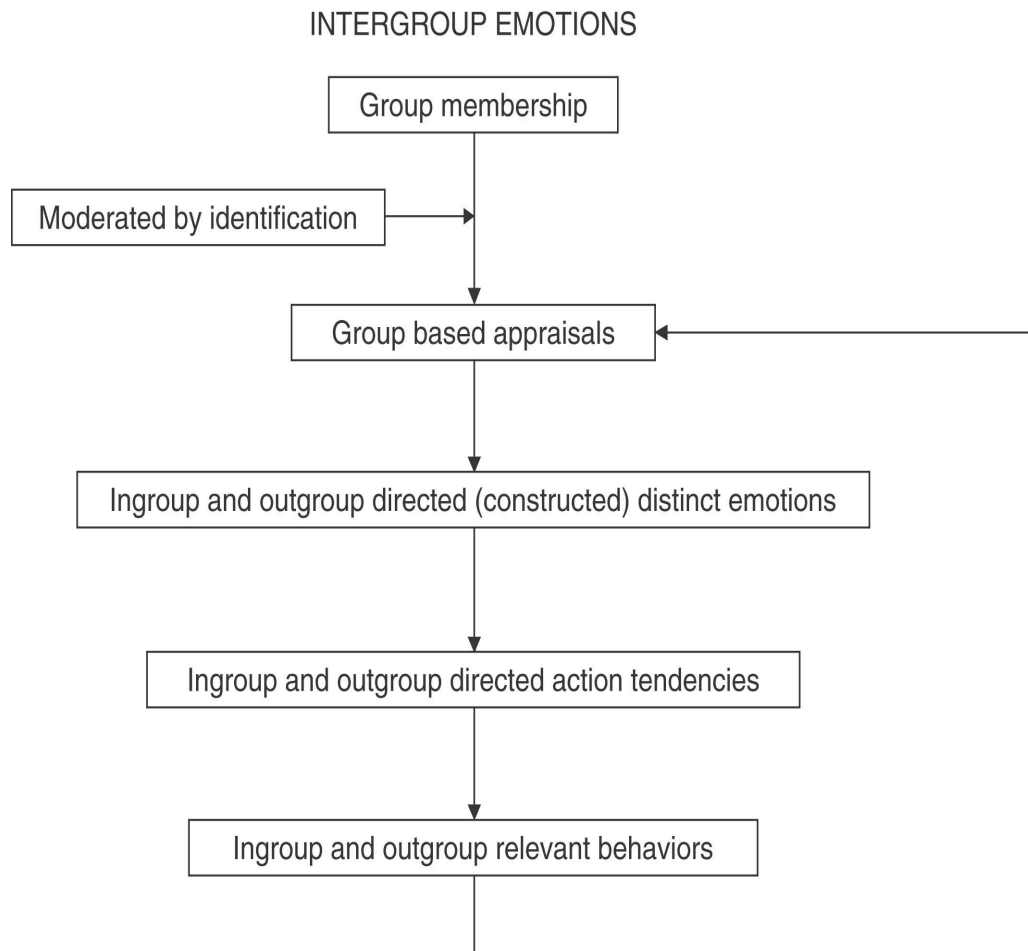
ITT also outlines how individual group members might respond in the presence of those who are perceived to pose a realistic or symbolic threat to the group and, by extension, to the self. According to Stephan and Stephan (1985), people tend to experience intergroup anxiety during a social interaction with a member of an outgroup. The origin of this distress is generally negative prior contact with, or prejudicial attitudes about, outgroups. The negative stereotypes generally result in individuals expecting negative outcomes from any interaction with members of an outgroup. These negative stereotypes inform expectations of an outgroup member's intentions or behaviours. For example, white people have been known to cross the street if, at night, a black person approaches from the opposite direction. The expectation here is that if the white person proceeds towards the black person, he or she might be attacked. Thus, negative stereotypes can lead to fear, but also a plethora of other emotions whose expression depends on the social context in which they are activated (Stephan & Stephan, 1996).

#### 4.2.4.2 Intergroup Emotion Theory

More recently, Smith (1993) has introduced Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET) that posits that people appraise situations, experience emotions, and subsequently engage in behaviours as members of social groups, rather than as individuals (see Figure 5, next page). The notions expressed in IET are a direct integration of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and Self-categorization

Theory (Turner et al., 1987) as well as appraisal theories of emotion (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Frijda, 1986; Roseman, 1984). As such, stemming from this integration, Smith contends that an event, real or imagined, will elicit an emotional reaction if it is perceived to be relevant to the socially extended self, i.e., one's social identity.

The concept of a "socially extended self", which emerges from the social identity and self-categorization literature, provides the basis for IET. According to SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), an individual's self-concept encompasses both perceptions of oneself as an individual and as a member of groups. One's social group membership(s) provides an integral aspect of one's self-concept, called social identity, which functions in the same manner as other aspects of the self. Social identity is the result of group identification, which involves both a cognitive awareness of group membership and a value connotation related to this awareness (Tajfel, 1982). When an individual identifies with a particular social group, that group acquires emotional significance. Thus, the group becomes a central point of reference, and group members align their perceptions, attitudes, *feelings* and behaviours with ingroup values and norms (Hogg, 2000a). Importantly, greater ingroup identification with the group (i.e., a great sense of connection to the group) predicts a stronger desire to achieve and maintain positive identity (Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Kelly, 1988). In a meta-analytic review, Jetten and colleagues (2004) found that for highly identified group members it is of particular importance to act in ways that establish and maintain a distinctive group identity. That is, high identifiers are motivated to react when they perceive their group to be under threat by taking action to solidify the group.



*Figure 5: Intergroup Emotions Theory (Smith, 1993)*

As such, when events impact the group, evaluations or appraisals of that event are analyzed from the perspective of a group member and not as a unique individual. This depersonalization process is crucial for understanding why and how people take the actions they do within an intergroup context. Specifically, people defer to their ingroup to determine what to believe and how to behave. They rely on their group, their social identity, to provide information about how to understand or appraise a situation, which leads a person to react emotionally and to take appropriate action. This process becomes amplified as members increasingly feel a sense of connection to their group.

Importantly, akin to other appraisal theorists (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Roseman, 1984), IET contends that emotions are cognitively determined. That is, different emotions are produced by distinct combinations of cognitive appraisals. Cognitive appraisals are configurations of cognitions or beliefs linked to a specific emotion. According to this perspective, objects, situations, or events are appraised across a variety of dimensions (e.g., pleasantness, agency, certainty, etc.). For example, when an outgroup is appraised as threatening to the ingroup, negative intergroup emotions such as anger, fear, or anxiety results (Smith, 1993). Thus, appraisal theories have an explicit causal assumption: an appraisal elicits an emotion, which subsequently yields an action tendency (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman, 1984).

Roseman (1994) outlined five types of cognitive appraisals that can yield distinct emotions. *Consistency appraisals* occur when an assessment is needed as to whether a situation is consistent or inconsistent with what the ingroup desires. Whereas consistent situations result in the experience of positive emotions, inconsistent situations result in the experience of negative emotions. For example, if a group believes it is the rightful owner of a given territory and has recently occupied that territory, group members are likely to experience joy and elation as was the case when Israelis reunified the city of Jerusalem in the June 1967 war. The consequence of this situation was a resultant inconsistency appraisal by Palestinians specifically, and Muslims more generally, who believed that they were the rightful owners of East Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, Israeli control over the Old City and surrounding Arab neighbourhoods was met with anger. *Legitimacy appraisals* stem from an evaluation of whether or not a given situation is fair or unfair. When aggressive action, for example, is perceived to be legitimate, group members are unlikely to experience guilt for their action (see Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). Judgments of responsibility initiate *agency appraisals*. In conflict situations, group members can view the origins of the tension to be actions associated with the ingroup or the outgroup. If the conflict is perceived to be the responsibility of the outgroup, then ingroup action is appraised as self-defence (Wohl et al., 2006; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). *Strength appraisals* reflect a cognitive evaluation of whether the group has the resources needed in a situation (strength) or not (weakness). Members who perceive the ingroup as strong are more likely to experience anger toward the outgroup and to desire to take action against it (Mackie et al., 2000). Conversely, emotions such as fear, that contain appraisals of the ingroup as weak, for example, should lead to avoidance behaviours (i.e., moving away or avoiding an adversary). Lastly, *certainty appraisals* reflect assessments of how confident a perceiver is about the outcome of an event. Emotions such as hope, fear, and anxiety contain high levels of uncertainty (Roseman, 1984). Because uncertainty is aversive (Hogg, 2000a), group members are motivated to take uncertainty reducing action. Thus, the result of all types of appraisals is the experience of a specific emotion, which in turn, elicits specified responses or action tendencies.

According to IET, anger directed toward an outgroup generally occurs when there are low levels of consistency and legitimacy, but high levels of outgroup responsibility for the perceived situation at hand, as well as high levels of perceived strength and certainty. Under such conditions, anger is likely to result in action taken against the outgroup. For example, a group member is likely to take up arms against members of another group if it is perceived that the relative position between ingroup and outgroup is unfair and inconsistent with what is believed should be the relative position of the ingroup, coupled with perceptions that the outgroup is responsible for group inequality and the ingroup has the strength and is certain about the outcome of the engagement with the outgroup. Mackie, Silver, Maitner, and Smith (2002) provided empirical support for this understanding by demonstrating that when a situational context was manipulated such that participants made the aforementioned constellation of appraisals, they reported anger and the desire to take action against the target group.

With a slightly altered constellation of appraisals, however, group members are likely to experience fear toward outgroups. Specifically, when people experience low consistency and legitimacy, perceive the outgroup as responsible, but perceive the ingroup to be weak and are uncertain about the outcome of action, fear is likely to be experienced. Unlike anger, feelings of fear are associated with motivational tendencies to avoid the outgroup. Thus, both anger and fear can be experienced as the result of a negative situation for which an outgroup is responsible, but they differ with respect to the appraisals of ingroup strength as well as outcome certainty, which results in very different behaviours.

By extension, it is likely that the actions of ANSA members and supporters result in part from appraisals of their group's structural relations with an outgroup that lead to anger. Recent

research (e.g., Devos et al., 2002; Mackie et al., 2004) suggests that a fundamental determinant of whether or not action is taken against an outgroup is whether or not that outgroup is perceived to be capable of negatively impacting the ingroup. For example, even if the proposed constellation of appraisals produces anger, action against the outgroup will only occur if that group is perceived to have the capacity to hurt, harm or destroy the ingroup.

By employing this emotion-based theory, the often virulent and violent nature of intergroup conflict, as well as its situational specificity, is provided a better account (Smith & Ho, 2002). Indeed, IET may be especially useful when applied to traditional understandings of conflict and aggression. To the point, the IET framework leads to the insight that appraisals and emotions are key psychological processes involved in the decision to take action and under certain conditions that action is likely to be aggressive.

#### **4.2.4.3 Aggression Relevant Emotions**

Aside from anger, we examine two other emotions that may be implicated in the support for and willingness to engage in aggressive action directed at outgroup members. Specifically, we examine the role collective hate and collective angst play in motivating group members to engage in aggressive behaviour against members of another social group. We argue that while collective hate is an emotion that is directed at a perceived adversarial outgroup, collective angst is an emotion that is inherently ingroup focused. That said, both emotions are likely central for understanding why non-state actors are willing to arm themselves to harm others.

##### **4.2.4.3.1 Hate and the Motivation That Stems From It**

One of the most powerful emotions that drives aggression is hate. According to Sternberg (2003), hate is a hostile emotion that is directed toward another person or group. Its fundamental components are malice and repugnance that typically results in a willingness to harm and even annihilate the object of hatred. Indeed, hate has the potential for extreme behavioural consequences, in part, because it is an “enduring organization of aggressive impulses toward a person or class of persons. Since it is composed of habitual bitter feelings and accusatory thoughts, it constitutes a stubborn structure in the mental-emotional life of the individual” (Allport, 1954, p. 363). Unlike anger that can quickly abate, hate is an extreme and continuous emotion that rejects a person or a group in a generalized and totalistic fashion (Ben-Zeev, 1992). That is, hate is typically considered to be an all-encompassing emotion that leaves little room for forgiveness.

Intergroup conflict can provide a fertile breeding ground for hatred. This is because the adversarial group is often viewed as a potential threat to the ingroup’s very existence (Baumeister & Butz, 2005). A considerable body of theory and research has highlighted the importance of such group threat in shaping intergroup behaviour (e.g. Bourhis & Giles, 1977, Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Spears et al., 2002; Wohl et al., 2010). For example, Wohl and colleagues (2010) showed that extinction threats motivated group members to take ingroup protective action. Not surprisingly then when members of a group feel threatened, the effect can be increased intolerance and ethnocentrism (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Levine & Campbell, 1972). Hate appears to be at the epicentre (White, 1984).

According to White (1984), hate can drive conflict due to the cold, deep, and steady nature of this negative emotion. Halperin (2008), however, found that hatred can also be a hot emotion that results from immediate cues that arouse it. Specifically, hot hate emerges under conditions of continuing harm by an outgroup, which is viewed as being intentional, unjustified, and attributed to stable negative dispositions of outgroup members. Acts committed by the outgroup are thus framed as offensive and intentional. In situations of intractable conflict, hate is often openly

expressed and cultivated by group leaders. That is, leaders often determine whether the fires of hatred are further stoked, or merely deserving of benign comment. Hatred can therefore be seen as an igniter of violent acts on the part of an individual or group, which can be used to a group leader's ends.

When properly stoked, hate toward a particular group can become part of the group's narrative. Feelings of hate are transmitted to successive generations of group members, which is often coupled with that the warning that vigilance must be kept due to the threat the hated group poses. Permeating this hate-infused narrative are beliefs that the outgroup generally and its members specifically are evil and willing to do anything to destroy ingroup members. A consequence can be a siege mentality (Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992), leading to more hate and increased desire to take any means necessary to shield the ingroup. The net result is that the roots of hatred become strongly embedded in both the individual and his or her group. As such, harmful and aggressive actions taken against the adversary group are justified as pre-emptive or mere retaliation for a conflict that the ingroup did not initiate (see Wohl & Branscombe, 2008).

Hatred is a potent motivating force because it may lead to the most violent acts against the hated group, including extreme forms of terrorism, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide (Kressel, 1996; Sternberg, 2003; Yanay, 2002). Theoretical approaches for the rise and diffusion of hatred have taken three main forms. The first relates mainly to the perceived unjust allocation of resources and differentials in group power; the second pertains to issues of social identity and the desire to achieve and maintain a positive view of the social self; the third focuses on the general attributes of society.

In line with Realistic Conflict Theory (Sherif, 1966), Glazer and Moynihan (1970) stated that conflict and hate between groups could best be understood in terms of a competition for scarce resources. According to Giles and Hertz (1994), the level of tension between groups is a function of their competitive positions and the more threat another group poses in terms of their ability to secure scarce resources is a source of hate. Adolf Hitler and his propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, might have had an intuitive knowledge of this concept by choosing Jews as their main target for the economic depression that followed the end of World War I. Indeed, the Jew was pit against the "pure German" as a competitor for resources and as the source of economic hardship. This framing of the economic problem laid the groundwork for the "solution to the Jewish problem" (i.e., the Holocaust). Importantly, both in the context of Nazi Germany and beyond, intensity of hate need not depend on real competition but instead on the perception of threat, which is sufficient to induce animosity (Wimmer, 1997).

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), intergroup conflict and by extension hate are not the consequence of economic competition between rival groups, but a product of the desire to achieve and maintain a positive social identity. Indeed, fear about the loss of resources plays a more modest role than general fears of loss of social status and social identity. Accordingly, self-interest predicated in more rational choice, economic theories (i.e., RCT) is not necessarily involved. Cultural differences and issues of identity are likely responsible for conflicts and hatred (Wimmer, 1997).

A third approach to understanding hate and its power to drive aggression directed at an outgroup attributes xenophobia not to economic strains or social identity processes, but instead to attributes of a particular society or culture. Specifically, when society experiences deep-gripping crises, which occur intermittently, anomic tensions encroach upon social postures. This leads to a crisis of social identity "so that the calm self-certainty which might enable unproblematic relations with the minorities gets lost" (Wimmer 1997, p. 27). According to this approach, xenophobia and the hate directed at others is interpreted as a way of reassuring the national self and its boundaries, as

an attempt at making sense of the world in times of a national crisis. We return to this issue of identity crisis in the following section on collective angst.

Not only does hate precipitate violence, but it is associated with the acceptance of mass murder and genocide (Staub, 2005). Echoing the possible extreme negative outcomes of hate, Halperin (2008) argued that group-based hatred can be a powerful and effective weapon if one's goal is to eliminate an outgroup. Moreover, intractable conflicts are generally a hotbed for hate and thus can lead to dire intergroup consequences. The genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1995 may be an archetype for the negative effects of hate. Indeed, an estimated million Tutsis were murdered by Hutus, some of whom were related by marriage, friendship, or through the workplace. Even so, Hutu hatred reached such an extreme level that murder and mutilation became commonplace throughout the country.

Not only can hate instigate extreme violence, but it also maintains violence – thus hate can be placed as a key variable in an understanding of intractable conflicts. As noted by Halperin (2008), hatred can be used to prolong and preserve a conflict. Recognizing the effect hatred has on any conflict, parties interested in the continuation of same have often found hatred quite useful. The Arab-Israeli conflict is an unfortunately apt example. To this day, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza have made it their professed goal to destroy the Jewish state. While in Israel, Kach, Kahane Chai, and their subsequent movements vow to expel Arabs and capture land from surrounding Arab countries. Leaders from both sides have recognized the need for prolonging the conflict until their goals have been achieved. To this end, hatred of the other is incited. For example, in promoting their goals, both Hezbollah and Hamas fan the flames of hatred by espousing hatred of Israel to its youth. Media programming, school texts, and songs have been created which incite hatred towards Israel and encourages martyrdom in the holy war, or jihad, which has been declared against it. In this way, a positive resolution of this conflict may be kept at bay for many more years to come.

The importance of hate should not be downplayed. Indeed, a possible explanation for the regression of peace in the Middle East and the continued activities of ANSAs in the region is hate. According to Halperin and colleagues (2009) hatred may be the single most important predictor of political intolerance and intergroup violence. Once hatred takes hold, having positive thoughts, attempts at improving relations, acceptance, and tolerance between the ingroup and outgroup becomes difficult. Moreover, mediation between groups becomes less and less possible. Contact between the groups also suffers. One need only look at the Middle East peace process for confirmation. Since the Oslo peace accord was signed by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1992, little in the way of progress towards an enduring peace has occurred – and some would suggest it has regressed.

Hate is such a powerful emotion, that people are willing to forfeit their civil liberties if they perceive that their political enemies pose a serious threat and that doing so will help destroy the source of that threat (Gibson, 2006). In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, American airport security quickly reacted by using racial profiling of airline passengers. Moreover, there was overwhelming support of President Bush's desire to invade Afghanistan in order to root out the wrongdoers through aggressive military action. Building on this, Halperin et al. (2009) suggested that threat perceptions incite hatred, which in turn leads to intolerance.

Intolerance of another group can easily result in dehumanization of the members of that group. Dehumanization is an extension of a less intense process of developing an “enemy image” of the opponent (see social psychologist Ralph K. White's pioneering work on enemy images, described in Eckhardt, 1991). During the course of protracted conflict, feelings of hate shape the way that



the parties perceive each other. Adversarial attitudes and perceptions develop and parties begin to attribute negative traits to their opponent. They may come to view the opponent as an evil enemy, deficient in moral virtue, or as a dangerous, warlike monster.

An enemy image is a negative stereotype through which the outgroup is viewed as evil, in contrast to the ingroup, which is seen as good. Such images can stem from a desire for group identity and a need to contrast the distinctive attributes and virtues of the ingroup with the vices of the outgroup (Stein, 1996). Importantly, enemy images are usually black and white. The harm perpetrated by the outgroup is thought to reflect their fundamental evil nature, traits, or motives (Rubin & Pruitt, 1994). In other words, the harm is framed as informative about group members' nature as opposed to the situational context that might have elicited the behaviour that caused the harm. The faults of the ingroup as well as the possible positive values of the outgroup and motivations behind the outgroup's actions are discounted, denied, or ignored. It subsequently becomes difficult to empathize or see the outgroup's point of view. Meaningful communication becomes unlikely, and common ground is perceived to be unattainable.

Once formed, enemy images tend to resist change, and serve to perpetuate and intensify hate and by extension conflict. Because the adversary has come to be viewed as a “diabolical enemy” – or “irreconcilable” in a counterinsurgency (COIN) context – the conflict is framed as a war between good versus evil (Rubin & Pruitt, 1994). Once the parties have framed the conflict in this way, their positions become more rigid. The result is often an improved image of the ingroup (enhanced social identity) and increased group cohesion, but at the expense of conflict escalation and dehumanization of the outgroup. In some cases, zero-sum thinking develops as parties come to believe that they must either secure their own victory, or face defeat. New goals to punish or destroy the opponent arise, and ANSAs professing these goals surface.

Once certain groups are stigmatized as evil, morally inferior, and not fully human, the persecution of those groups becomes more psychologically acceptable. Restraints against aggression and violence begin to disappear. Not surprisingly, dehumanization increases the likelihood of violence and may cause a conflict to escalate out of control. In addition, perceiving members of an outgroup as evil or less than human make it easier and even acceptable to do things that the ingroup would have regarded as morally unthinkable before.

Parties may come to believe that destruction of the other side is necessary, and pursue an overwhelming victory that will cause their opponent to simply disappear. This sort of into-the-sea framing can cause lasting damage to relationships between the conflicting parties, making it more difficult to solve their underlying problems and leading to the loss of more innocent lives. Indeed, dehumanization often paves the way for human rights violations, war crimes, and genocide. For example, in WWII, the dehumanization of the Jews ultimately led to the destruction of millions of people. Similar processes were at play in Rwanda, Cambodia, and the former Yugoslavia. In the currencies of aggression relevant emotions, therefore, hatred should be considered as the gold standard.

#### **4.2.4.3.2 Collective Angst and the Motivation to Protect the Ingroup**

Negative emotions are typically experienced when people perceive a threat to the self. Which specific negative emotion will predominate depends on the nature of the threat and how it is interpreted. For example, hate can stem from an intergroup narrative that highlights the wrongs an outgroup has perpetrated against one's own group. Feelings of angst, however, emerge when a person experiences an intense concern that something negative will befall the self in the future (Barlow, 1988). Importantly, angst is in the fear “family” of emotion – characterized by feelings of apprehension in situations that are perceived to be threatening (Baumeister et al., 1996). Most theorists agree that anxiety, however, can be distinguished from fear, which is characterized by an

immediate surge in arousal and an activation of the fight-or-flight response when confronted with a threatening situation (Gray, 1982). Anxiety, in contrast, is typically less intense and stems from a sense of *uncertainty*, concern for what *might happen in the future*, and lack of predictability. The uncertainty that results in anxiety is *future oriented* in that it is attuned to *prospective* threats, dangers, or other possible negative events (Barlow, 1991). Such anxiety is often non-specific in terms of the when, what and how a terrible thing might befall the self, coupled with certainty that it will happen eventually. This form of anxiety is often termed “angst,” where the individual exhibits self-focused worry concerning perceived possible threat-related outcomes (see Barlow, 1988; Rank, 1914; Sartre, 1956).

Angst can also be experienced as a result of perceived threats to the future of a group to which one belongs. According to Wohl and Branscombe (2008), in order for people to experience *collective angst*, group members must appraise a situation as potentially harmful to the future of the ingroup (i.e., the perception that the threat if realized will undermine the vitality of the ingroup). Due to the future-orientation of collective angst, the threat, if realized, may be quite removed from the group member’s current lived experience. For example, the Québécois may feel collective angst about the future of the French-Canadian culture because of the pervasive influence of English Canadian and American culture. Indeed, the Québécois are keenly aware of the decline in the use of French among francophones, and the rise of “mixed” marriages (Baumeister, 2003). Should group members extrapolate this situation over subsequent generations, French-Canadian culture might easily be perceived as likely to be compromised in the future (see Bourhis, 1994; Thomson, 1995 for discussions of ethno-linguistic vitality and the future of French-Canadian culture). The ultimately feared outcome, where one’s cultural identity is seen as likely to be lost, might not reach a critical threshold for generations. Nonetheless, because the group is an extension of the self, when group members feel the future vitality of their group is in danger, collective angst will be experienced.

The consequences of collective angst among some French-Canadians was elucidated in the early part of 2007, when the small town of Herouville in the Canadian province of Québec adopted a declaration of “norms” designed to force immigrants to conform to French Canadian values and traditions (National Post, 2007). The declaration forbid people from wearing ceremonial religious daggers (e.g., kirpans worn by some Sikhs) and wearing coverings over the face (e.g., hijabs worn by some Muslims). Interestingly, at present, the population of Herouville is exclusively French-Canadian. For this reason, the community cannot be seen as experiencing an immediate threat to their cultural identity. Nonetheless, a perceived threat to the *future* vitality of the values and traditions of the community could well be experienced, even though immediacy is lacking.

Not surprisingly, threat to the ingroup’s identity is a central explanatory concept in theories addressing intergroup attitudes and behavior (see Brewer, 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Threat is important because it can have a tremendous impact on the ingroup’s social identity – its goals, values, status, and its very existence. As such, when threatened, group members tend to engage in behaviors in defense of the ingroup.

We argue that collective angst is an emotional reaction to perceived realistic or symbolic future-oriented threats to the group as a whole. Indeed, Stephan and Stephan’s Integrated Threat Theory (1996) offers the threat of group extinction as an extreme instance of realistic threat (e.g., through warfare or genocide). Similarly, symbolic threats can challenge a group’s value structure and worldview. As noted by Allport (1954), “in a deep sense, we are the values that we hold” (p. 74). When the values of the ingroup are perceived as potentially slipping away, it is likely that collective angst will be experienced.

The accentuation of differences between social groups is a natural outgrowth of the categorization process. That is, group members want to see their group as being positively distinct from other groups. As a result, when between-group differences narrow, group members experience identity threat (Jetten et al., 2004). In response, group members tend to instigate efforts to restore distinctiveness. At the extreme, such efforts are directed toward the threatening outgroup. Indeed, the world has seen many violent clashes between groups that, to the outsider, seem objectively similar (Catholics and Protestants in Ireland; Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq). These similar outgroups pose a distinctiveness threat by challenging the very essence of the ingroup. Distinctiveness threats, however, do not necessarily have to be grounded in *immediate* loss for ingroup members to elicit negative affect. Distinctiveness threats can have a future-oriented, existential or existence threat component. For example, French Canadians have long been sensitive to the possible decline in their group's culture (Baumeister, 2003) and the potential threat of English culture to their group's way of life. In fact, this concern has been one of the driving forces behind the separatist movement in Québec (Burgess, 1996). When such concerns about the ingroup's vitality are heightened, there should be a desire among French-Canadians to support both inward-focused action (e.g., Québec sovereignty) as well as outward-focused behaviour directed at Ontario (e.g., restricting trade such as the reduction or elimination of power delivery to Ontario).

Recently, Wohl and colleagues (in press) tested the former. That is, they assessed whether perceived threats to French-Canadian distinctiveness promoted ingroup-focused action. They showed that when French and English Canadian culture was portrayed as one day becoming indistinguishable, French-Canadian participants became overwhelmingly supportive of Québec sovereignty, but only to the extent that they experienced collective angst. In a follow-up study, Canadian participants were told that future generations may not be able to distinguish Canadian culture from American culture. Once again, collective angst was elicited leading to the desire to protect Canadian sovereignty. The researchers argued that threats that undermine the structural position of the group (in terms of power, status, or distinctiveness) tend to enhance ingroup homogeneity as a means of maintaining a positive social identity and preparing the ingroup for collective defense (see also Turner et al., 1984; Simon, 2004). Although people like to believe their social groups have temporal persistence (see Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Sani et al., 2007), a group's future is not always perceived as being secure. Sometimes the ingroup's future is believed to be in jeopardy. At the extreme, circumstances may lead group members to believe there is a threat of ingroup extinction (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998; Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003).

Empirical research on group-based existential threat, however, has been relatively neglected. Specifically, the powerful psychological threat that emanates from the perceived eventual extinction of the ingroup has not typically been on the radar of social scientists. We find the absence of such research alarming. This is because extinction threats may be helpful when trying to understand when group members become willing to engage in ingroup protective action. Indeed, recently Wohl and colleagues (2010) demonstrated that when group members believe the existence of the ingroup might be in jeopardy, collective angst is elicited. Importantly, collective angst in turn resulted in support for ingroup strengthening behaviors. This effect occurred regardless of whether the extinction threat stemmed from the physical or symbolic demise of the group or cultural extinction.

Wohl et al. (2010) were also able to demonstrate this effect when the ingroup was reminded of a history in which their group faced existence threats. They began with the understanding that Jewish people, for example, often concern themselves with the possible non-existence of their group in light of their history of victimization (Kelman, 1999). Indeed, the Holocaust experience has become so woven into the fabric of Jewish people's social identity that it helps frame how group-relevant events are interpreted (Wohl & Branscombe, 2004). When salient, this history of victimization may encourage the belief that a similar victimization could befall the group again at

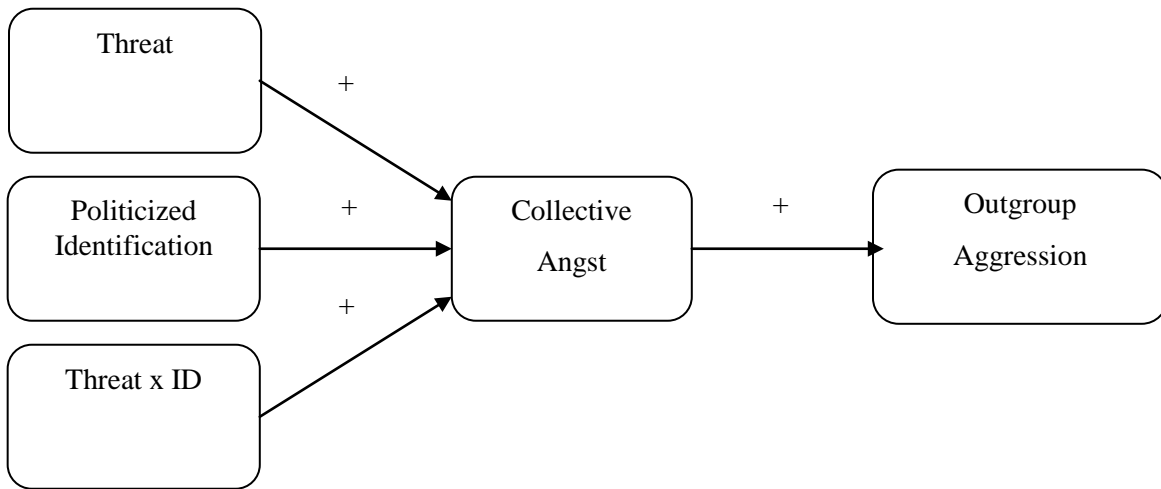
some future time (Kelman, 1999). Results confirmed their hypotheses. Specifically, they showed that when Jewish people were reminded of the Holocaust there was a heightened desire to protect the ingroup, but only to the extent that collective angst was experienced. Thus, when group members are reminded of their history of victimization, they are more likely to become anxious about their ingroup's future vitality, which should, in turn, motivate action aimed at strengthening and protecting the ingroup.

In the aforementioned study by Wohl et al., (2010) the ingroup strengthening and protective action was reflective of a desire to marry a fellow ingroup member as well as pass along group values and traditions to subsequent generations. However, collective angst might also have a more anti-social side. Wohl and Branscombe (2008), for example, reminded Americans about a time in American history when they had been the victims of an attack. As predicted, Americans experienced more collective angst following reminders of either the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 or the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, compared to when the victimization reminder was irrelevant to the ingroup. Importantly, they were also more willing to forgive their ingroup for their group's harm doing at present in Iraq. Thus, collective angst appears to help justify actions taken against a group that is perceived to be a threat to the ingroup. If the ingroup is forgiven for its action due to concern about the ingroup's future, does type of action taken against an adversary become justified?

We argue that collective angst might lead to militant behaviour in an attempt to advance the interests of the ingroup and secure its future. For example, in 2006, First Nations protesters occupied and barricaded the Douglas Creek Estates housing project in Caledonia, a quiet suburban community near Hamilton, Ontario, which they claim sits on sacred First Nations land. Thus, a divergence in interest was established: The developers wanted to expand available housing and the First Nations protesters wanted to protect their land from destruction. Whether or not the claim to the land was justified, the behaviour that followed was militant in nature. During the tense standoff, members of the Mohawk tribe were arrested for assaulting police officers with a weapon and mischief. In addition, protesters attacked two members of the media and took their camera.

Unfortunately, Ontario has witnessed even more radical, militant behaviour. In the summer of 2006, police conducted a massive anti-terrorism sweep in southern Ontario. Eighteen suspects – 14 adults and four youths – were arrested in a series of raids. The sweep was to foil an alleged conspiracy by 18 Canadian jihadis to detonate bombs constructed with ammonium nitrate in southern Ontario. The aim of the conspirators was to pressure the Canadian government into removing its troops from Afghanistan.

An important question has arisen as to why group members might engage in such aggressive, militant behaviour? It is argued herein that collective angst is perhaps not sufficient to elicit militant behaviour. For group members to support and engage in such behaviour also requires a politicized affiliation with the ingroup. According to Simon and Klanderman (2001), when group members become aware of grievances (e.g., the ingroup's interests are being ignored or subjugated), externalize blame (e.g., group interest is not being met because of a particular group or groups), and compensation is not offered or expected to be offered by the blamed group, affiliations with the ingroup will become politicized, thus priming members to engage in action to advance ingroup interests. With the coordinated hijack of four planes on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, in the United States, politicized affiliations with social groups moved from the margins to center stage. We suggest that the mix of politicized social identity and collective angst is a cocktail that manifests in support for and willingness to engage in militant behaviours (see Figure 6, next page).



*Figure 6: Identity and collective angst as factors leading to outgroup aggression*

We make such a contention because groups can be functionally effective for their members (providing support and resources), but can also lead to zero-sum views of identity, hate, atrocities, and a sustained commitment to the destruction of the outgroup (Kelman, 1999). As such, identity groups are often considered the key level-of-analysis for understanding social conflicts and militant behaviours (Azar, 1990; Rothman, 1997). Simon and Klandermans (2001) suggested groups that believe their interests are not being met will act to advance ingroup interests when members' social identity becomes politicized. Typically, those processes by which social identities become politicized begin with an awareness of grievances with an outgroup and the adversarial group is blamed for the ingroup's disadvantage. If appropriate compensation in terms of the advancement of group interests is not taken by the target outgroup, then a power struggle ensues. While a politicized social identity generally leads social movements to change the status quo, feelings of collective angst might move group behaviour from insular inward-focused action (e.g., organizing events that celebrate the ingroup) or peaceful protest to extreme outward-focused behaviour.

## 5 Understanding ANSAs in Failing States: Research Recommendations

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### 5.1 Overview

In the previous sections, the emergence of violent conflict in failing states was analyzed through the prism of six major social psychological theories of intergroup relations. Stemming from this review of the relevant literature, a number of psychological factors emerged as potentially having key roles in leading individuals to engage in conflict in failing states. These factors have been summarized in Table 1.

*Table 1: Psychological Factors Contributing to Violent Conflict*

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Factor	Psychological relationship to conflict
Scarce resources	Violent conflict is a form of competition to secure important resources.
Relative deprivation	Conflict is a strategy to redress perceived injustices caused by another group.
Illegitimacy of social system	Violent conflict is a means to oust the people who maintain the illegitimate social system.
Personality characteristics	Some individuals might be more sensitive to hierarchy differences and injustices; some individuals might be more attracted to the use of violence.
Group identity	Groups may choose to confront other groups that are considered an obstacle to obtaining a positively distinct group identity
Group emotions	Group members may be motivated to fight other groups perceived as causing collective feelings of angst and fear for the future of one's group.
Collective narratives	The narratives members have about their group can justify the use of violence towards another group.

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In the present section, certain factors from Table 1 have been selected and recommended to DRDC Toronto as potentially important avenues for future research. In comparison to other factors mentioned throughout this report, the factors presented here are thought to be central to the psychology involved in the emergence and maintenance of violent conflict in failing states. These factors are relative deprivation, group emotions, and group identity; all recurrent themes throughout social psychological explanations of conflict. Following these research recommendations, this section concludes by highlighting the importance of context. Here, building on DRDC Toronto's previous work on definitions, a functional typology of ANSAs is argued to be essential in establishing which social psychological factors are involved in the development and maintenance of the conflict.

### 5.2 Relative Deprivation

Extant research (e.g., Callan et al., 2008) has shown that people who feel relatively deprived are more likely to engage in risky behaviours that are aimed at eliminating their perceived deprived status. In this way, people believe that justice can be restored. We argue that a similar function

might be at play in failing states – people who feel relatively deprived (compared to other sub-national, national or supra-national groups, or to their group’s previous standing) will be more likely to support collective action, or actually take action, in order to restore or achieve a better lot for their group. In accordance with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), such responses should be especially prominent among those who feel a strong sense of connection to their “deprived” group. Based on these findings, research on the role of relative deprivation with ANSAs in failing states could be guided by the following questions:

1. Do ANSA members and supporters use clearly defined groups when comparing themselves and invoking claims of deprivation?
2. Can group comparisons be influenced in order to reduce hostility and conflict?
3. What type of comparisons (e.g., temporal) is more effective when using relative deprivation as a justification for violence?
4. Does the presence of foreign forces in a failing state exacerbate feelings of deprivation?

### **5.3 Group Emotions**

Emotions have distinct roles in the progression and maintenance of aggressive behaviour in failing states. As states fall into conflict, and members of that state begin to feel relatively deprived, they are likely to experience a range of emotions that can motivate specific action tendencies. Indeed, as reviewed herein, because part of our sense of self is derived by our membership in groups, when events impact the ingroup, group-based emotions will be elicited. What actions group members will engage in depends largely on what emotions are elicited from an event. Importantly, the emotion elicited is contingent on how group members appraise the event in question. If members feel their group is unable to cope with the factors that contributed to the state failing, fear is likely to be elicited. If the cause of the failing state can be directed at a particular outgroup, anger will likely be elicited. Whereas fear generally leads to avoidance, anger leads to approach behaviours. Moreover, if members become concerned about their group's future vitality, collective angst will be elicited. What is absent from the extant literature is how emotions may interact to predict willingness to engage in aggressive, extreme behaviours.

At present, research has focused on how specific emotions lead to specific actions (see Mackie et al., 2000). However, emotions are not experienced in isolation (see Barrett, 2006). That is, people can and do experience a multitude of emotions simultaneously. How these emotions interact to predict behaviour, however, has yet to be empirically investigated. It has been argued, though, that specific constellations of emotions should predict specific action tendencies, including willingness to take collective action against groups perceived to be the root of troubles currently experienced by their state.

Stemming from this specific constellation of emotions, group members may also shift to the extremes in their political ideology. When members become concerned about their group’s future they look inward to protect the group (see Wohl et al., 2010). One way this may manifest is in a relative unwillingness to show dissidence within the ranks, especially to the outside world. As such, people may become unwilling to protest against their government’s actions. This may be particularly problematic as public protest often serves to reign in governments that act against the best interests of their constituents. When protest or dissent is not voiced, groups might take a risky-shift to the political extremes. As radical behaviours become part of the rhetoric of group members, it can become part of a group’s narrative, leading to shifts in group norms. The net result is the normalization of extreme behaviours and support for violence in the name of protecting the group.

Indeed, to understand the role of collective emotions during the development and maintenance of conflict, much research is needed. The following questions may prove as valuable starting points:

1. Is there a specific combination of emotions that is likely to move ANSA members and supporters toward action?
2. What conditions moderate emotions to either facilitate aggressive behaviour, or hinder aggressive behaviour?
3. Can a specific emotion experienced by ANSA members and supporters be identified in order to better monitor potential conflict situations?
4. Can collective angst be undermined to better intergroup relations?
5. Can influence operations, or educational initiatives, be used to move group members away from intergroup hate?

## **5.4 Group Identity**

The theme of group identity has permeated most social psychological theories of conflict, and is the central concept in the most established theories of intergroup relations. Hence, a research program directed towards understanding ANSAs' engagement in conflict will need to explore variables related to group identity, and variables that interact with group identity. Here, two broad avenues of research concerning group identity are suggested. First is the structure of identity, and how conceptions of group identities can lead some to join ANSAs. A second avenue of research focuses on collective narratives, and how group identities are used in ANSAs' strategic communications to mobilize group members towards engaging in violence.

### **5.4.1 Structure of Group Identity**

To understand the social psychological motives of ANSA members and supporters, their group identity may be analyzed from a variety of perspectives. Of primary importance will be the structure and clarity of the collective identities of the various actors in any given battlespace. Specifically, research should investigate the structure and clarity of ANSAs' collective identities, the structure and clarity of ANSAs' potential recruits' group identities, as well as the structure and clarity of various group identities in the population at large. Research on the structure and clarity of collective identities could be guided by the following questions:

1. What are the most important elements in terms of the content of ANSA members and supporters' identities?
2. To what extent are young men and women attracted to the simplicity, clarity, and distinctiveness of the group identity that ANSAs provide?
3. What are the identity goals that permit ANSA members to rise in status within the group?
4. Do the identities of different ANSAs map onto the categories proposed by DRDC Toronto's typology of ANSA strategic roles (Moore et al., 2010; Moore, 2011)?
5. What is the "identity" message emphasized by ANSAs when recruiting and socializing?
6. What differences in identity do members of the wider community perceive between themselves and ANSAs?



7. Do the Canadian Forces (CF) present themselves with consensual clarity to ANSAs and the community at large in the theatre of operations?
8. Are there any vulnerable elements specific to ANSAs' identities that influence operations might exploit?
9. Is there a clear identity structure and content among various ANSAs?

#### **5.4.2 Collective Narratives**

The power and importance of collective narratives are apparent with one of the most notorious ANSA groups currently in operation: al Qaeda. Indeed, al Qaeda has spawned a worldwide movement, with franchises in Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Islamic Maghreb, and independent groups claiming fidelity to its global jihadist ideology. As such, al Qaeda has been said to be winning the “war of ideas” against the West (Roseneau, 2006). Underlying this effect, experts have highlighted a simple yet appealing populist message throughout the rhetoric of al Qaeda and similar jihadi groups. That message, in its simplest form, stresses that *Islam is under threat* (Lia, 2008; Wagemakers, 2008). Those broadcasting this message emphasize that Islam is under attack by the “Jewish enemy, led by America and its nonbelieving, apostate, hypocritical allies” (Suri, cited in Wright, 2006).

This populist message and the accompanying allegations have been labeled by security experts as the “single narrative” (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2007; Kilcullen, 2006; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2009). Believing that Islam is under attack, and interpreting events through the perspective advocated in this narrative, are thought to be important factors in radicalizing people (Sageman, 2008b; Wiktorowicz, May 8-9 2004). This single narrative is considered to be a major influencing factor for those involved in terrorist plots in the West (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2009), and undoubtedly, for many ANSA members who have joined the global jihad against the West. Roy (2008) goes so far as to say that:

“The success of Osama Bin Laden is not to have established a modern and efficient Islamist political organisation, but to have invented a narrative that could allow rebels without a cause to connect with a cause” (p. 1).

The single narrative's central tenet – the threat to Islam – has proven to be quite potent. Indeed, there exists a robust correlation between the perception of this threat and support for terrorism. For example, the Pew Research Center, which surveyed more than 7000 people in 14 Muslim countries, found that those who believe Islam to be under threat are more likely to support terrorism (Fair & Shepherd, 2006).

Despite recognizing the popularity and effectiveness of this narrative, exactly how the underlying message motivates some people towards violence has been relatively unexplored. More specifically, the psychological mechanism by which this specific message increases the legitimacy of terrorism remains unclear. Yet compared to many other factors that might lead ANSAs to engage in conflict, collective narratives are quite amenable to empirical research, as narratives are simple to experimentally manipulate. For example, preliminary research at McGill University has been conducted to identify what elements in a narrative are more effective at legitimizing the use of terrorism. Findings suggests that individuals exposed to narratives emphasizing threats to collective identities, as compared to narratives emphasizing injustice, are more likely to justify the use of terrorism. Regarding the narratives disseminated by ANSA groups, future research may be guided by the following questions:

1. What characterizes those who are more receptive to the narratives disseminated by ANSAs?
2. Are group identities used within narratives to influence popular support for ANSAs?
3. Can narratives disseminated by ANSAs directly inform counter-insurgency strategists?
4. Can counter-narratives be constructed? Are counter-narratives effective?

For counter-insurgency strategists, factors such as this narrative should be at the top of research agendas, as it is more manageable to contend with a narrative than many other factors, such as relative deprivation, poverty, and foreign policy, which are diffuse and difficult to address in the short term.

## **5.5 Contexts and Typologies**

At present, the social sciences cannot identify with exactness which individual will pick up arms in a failing state. What the social sciences can offer though – borrowing a concept from statistics – are likelihood estimators. Through the study of social psychological processes, much knowledge has been gained regarding intergroup violence and conflict. Yet an important gap remains between where this knowledge has been acquired, such as university settings in developed countries, and where this knowledge is to be applied, such as in conflict-ridden areas in failing states. Taking into account this gap, social scientists can estimate the likelihood that their knowledge is applicable in these specific, often precarious, real-world settings.

Understanding the context is crucial in estimating the likelihood that the findings reviewed in the present report can inform real-world situations. Indeed, the specific context of an ANSA will determine which social psychological factors were likely involved in the ANSA members' choice to engage in violence. For example, a context of institutionalized discrimination, which gave rise to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Front de Libération du Québec, involves issues pertaining to group identity. Conversely, a context of economic exploitation, which gave rise to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (see p. 12), involves issues pertaining to relative deprivation.

Thus, the first step in understanding which social psychological factors are motivating ANSA members and supporters is to understand the overall context surrounding these groups. Herein lies the importance of creating a functional typology of ANSAs. Gross typologies have been offered in the literature, such as the distinction between social-revolutionary vs. nationalistic-separatist groups (Post, 2007). Additionally, research has been undertaken by the Adversarial Intent Section of DRDC Toronto to create such a functional typology of ANSAs based on the strategic roles these groups can play in the context of violent intergroup conflict (Moore et al., 2010; Moore, 2011). A functional typology would bridge the established social-psychological processes discussed in the present report with the particular context of a conflict. To exemplify the importance of context, the differences between two theatres of operation where Western militaries are in conflict with non-state actors, Iraq and Afghanistan, are highlighted. Compared to Iraq, Afghanistan has a longer history of war, a weaker government, and fewer resources. Afghanistan also has a larger population which is more rural, more dispersed, and much more ethnically varied than Iraq. Such contextual characteristics must be considered when seeking to understand how violent conflict emerges and is maintained in various failing states.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Finally, in addition to specific social psychological mechanisms regarding ANSA members and their involvement in conflict, researchers will need to resolve methodological issues. Although

certain questions about ANSAs in failing states can be answered with traditional research methods based on experiments with Western university students, some questions specific to ANSAs cannot be answered this way. Arguably, it is research based on primary source data – data collected directly from ANSAs and their current, or more practically, former members and supporters – that will yield the most applicable insights. An example has been provided by the work of Sageman (2004) who, by gathering demographic data on jihadis worldwide, was able to defy conventional wisdom by providing evidence that those who engage in violent jihad were likely from the high or middle-class, and generally well educated.

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## **List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms**

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ANSA	Armed Non-State Actor
DRDC	Defence Research & Development Canada
FLQ	Front de Libération du Québec
HA	Hierarchy-Attenuating
HE	Hierarchy-Enhancing
IET	Intergroup Emotions Theory
ILR	Integrative Literature Review
ITT	Integrated Threat Theory
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
RCT	Realistic Conflict Theory
RD	Relative Deprivation Theory
RMT	Resource Mobilization Theory
SD	Social Dominance
SDO	Social Dominance Orientation
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SJ	System Justification
TMT	Terror Management Theory



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- (U) The Adversarial Intent Section of Defence Research and Development Canada – Toronto (DRDC Toronto) has been tasked with gaining a better understanding of the root causes of violent conflict perpetrated by armed non–state actors (ANSAs) in fragile and failing states. For this, DRDC Toronto has contracted two leading social psychologists in the field of intergroup relations who, together with their teams, have conducted an integrative review of the literature. The present report presents the results of this literature review, which is organized around six major social psychological theories that outline factors precipitating the development of conflict, factors maintaining conflict, and factors leading to stability. Recommendations intended to guide further research are provided, emphasizing perceptions of relative deprivation, group–based emotions, group identity, and collective narratives.
- (U) La section de l'intention de l'adversaire (IA) de Recherche et développement pour la défense Canada – Toronto (RDDC Toronto) avait pour objectif de mieux comprendre les causes fondamentales des conflits violents déclenchés par les ANEA au sein d'états fragiles et en déroute. À cette fin, RDDC Toronto a conclu un marché avec deux psychosociologues éminents dans le domaine des relations intergroupes, lesquels ont procédé à une analyse documentaire intégrative, en collaboration avec leurs équipes. Ce rapport présente les résultats de cette analyse documentaire, qui s'articule autour de six théories psychosociales importantes décrivant les causes déterminantes, les facteurs d'entretien et les facteurs de maîtrise des conflits. On y trouve des recommandations visant à orienter d'autres recherches sur les perceptions de la privation relative, l'état émotionnel au sein des groupes, l'identité collective et les récits collectifs.
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