FINDING VALUE IN DIVERSITY: VERIFICATION OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SELF-VIEWS IN DIVERSE GROUPS

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We propose a model of group processes that accords a key role to the verification of people's self-views (thoughts and feelings about the self). This approach partially incorporates past work on self-categorization (under the rubric of verification of *social* self-views) and introduces a new set of processes (the verification of *personal* self-views) to the groups literature. Conceptual analysis and recent empirical evidence suggest the self-verification framework offers a novel perspective on finding value in diversity.

In his global history, Jared Diamond (1997) argues persuasively that major technological advances have often occurred when previously unacquainted societies have encountered one another. Diamond's explanation for such advances is straightforward: combining the varied ideas, knowledge, and skills of different cultures greatly enhances the potential for creative synthesis. Proponents of the "value in diversity" hypothesis (e.g., Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993) recently have made a parallel—albeit more modest—claim. They argue that contact between workers from diverse backgrounds will lead to the development of novel solutions to the tasks at hand. These novel solutions will, in turn, enable them to outperform workers from homogeneous backgrounds.

Or so it would seem. As likely as the value in diversity hypothesis appears, no one seems to have gotten the word to the participants in the relevant research. To the dismay of many, relative to homogeneous groups, members of diverse groups display less attachment to each other, show less commitment to their respective organizations (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992), communicate less with one another (Hoffman, 1985; Watson et al., 1993), miss work more often (O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989; Tsui et al., 1992, Wagner, Pfeffer, & O'Reilly, 1984), experience more conflict (Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999), and take more time to reach decisions (Hambrick, Cho, & Chen, 1996). A rather slender ray of hope comes from evidence that diversity is at least as likely to help performance as it is to impair it (e.g., Guzzo & Dickson, 1996; Jehn et al., 1999; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Pelled et al., 1999; for a review, see Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

Why might diversity sow dissension within groups? Some researchers (Pelled et al., 1999; Tsui et al., 1992) have proposed that identifying individual group members with distinct groups (i.e., "outgroups") may disrupt group dynamics. Consistent with this, research on self-categorization theory has shown that outgroup members evoke more disliking, distrust, and competition than ingroup members (e.g., Brewer, 1979; Hogg,

Cooper-Shaw, & Holzworth, 1993; Hogg & Hardie, 1991, 1992). Moreover, biases against outgroup members seem to unfold automatically: the perception of a salient quality (e.g., race, sex) more or less inevitably triggers a corresponding categorization (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). In addition, if outgroup members come from cultures or subcultures with which ingroup members are unfamiliar, linguistic or paralinguistic differences may foster miscommunication and misunderstanding (Hambrick, Davison, Snell, & Snow, 1998; Palich & Gomez-Mejia, 1999). Less palpable differences associated with attitudes, perceptions, and expectations (Palich & Gomez-Mejia, 1999; Tsui et al., 1992) may pose subtler but nevertheless formidable deterrents to communication and understanding in diverse groups. Together, these factors may combine to make diverse groups a fertile breeding ground for misunderstanding and discord.

The challenge of translating diversity's potential into reality appears to be a daunting one. Self-categorization theorists have attempted to meet this challenge. In particular, they have contended that members of diverse groups must shift their focus from the qualities that make them unique to the superordinate identity of the group. At first blush, this contention is quite appealing. After all, persuading members to focus on superordinate goals has long been successful in inducing groups to overcome difficulties associated with competing perspectives within them (Sherif, 1958, 1966).

Nevertheless, although emphasizing superordinate goals and the identities associated with them may represent an effective means of uniting members of diverse groups, it falls short as a strategy for finding value in diversity. Indeed, taken to its logical extreme, self-categorization theory suggests that members of diverse groups should become so single-mindedly committed to the groups' agendas that distinctions among them become blurred. Such blurring of the differences that make a team diverse will necessarily thwart efforts to find value in diversity. From this vantage point, although emphasizing superordinate identities may serve to unify members of diverse groups initially, as a strategy for finding value in diversity, it is tantamount to arguing that the best way to exploit a resource (in this case, the unique characteristics of diverse group members) is to minimize and disregard that resource!

In this article we advance an alternative strategy for finding value in diversity. Our approach, which is grounded in self-verification theory (Swann, 1983), emphasizes the processes through which people seek and attain confirmation of their self-views. We suggest that people desire such confirmation because it engenders feelings of being known and understood. Moreover, receiving confirmation of their self-views encourages members of diverse groups to identify with the group and emboldens them to put forth creative ideas and insights they might otherwise feel too inhibited to share. We buttress this hypothesis by describing relevant empirical evidence.

To better understand this novel approach to group processes and how it differs from the approach championed by self-categorization theorists (e.g., Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), we first contrast the two theories.

SELF-CATEGORIZATION AND SELF-VERIFICATION APPROACHES TO GROUP FUNCTIONING

Self-categorization theorists (e.g., Hogg & Haines, 1996; Turner, 1985) assume that groups create cohesiveness by encouraging members to see themselves in terms of their membership in the group. Theoretically, one manifestation of this cohesiveness is the ingroup bias mentioned above: the tendency to favor members of one's own group over members of other groups. Presumably, the ingroup bias fosters cohesiveness within groups, which, in turn, promotes cooperation and productivity.

A tendency for group members to align themselves with the group may come at a price, however. The principle of functional antagonism (Turner, 1985) states that, insofar as people emphasize the qualities they share with the group, they will de-emphasize the qualities that make them unique individuals. Indeed, when people align themselves with the group, they theoretically undergo a change

in the level of abstraction of self-categorization in the direction that represents a *depersonalization of self-perception*, a shift toward the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self as a unique person defined by individual differences from others (Turner et al., 1987: 50–51; emphasis added).

To "sign on" to group identity, then, people must relinquish—if only temporarily—their personal identities. Self-categorization theorists hold that this diminution in the psychological significance of personal identities is crucial to group functioning.

Self-verification theory (Swann, 1983, 1996) turns this argument on its head. Whereas self-categorization theorists ask, "How do groups bring the self-views of their members into harmony with the groups' agendas?" self-verification theorists ask, "How do individuals bring their experiences in groups into harmony with their self-views?" In self-categorization theory the group shapes the self-views of its members, while in self-verification theory individuals shape their actual and perceived experiences within groups.

Specifically, self-verification theorists propose that people actively strive to ensure that their experiences in groups confirm their self-views (thoughts and feelings about the self). To this end, they employ three distinct strategies. First, people construct self-verifying *opportunity structures* (McCall and Simmons' [1966] label for social environments that satisfy people's needs) by seeking and entering into groups in which they are apt to enjoy confirmation of their self-views.[1] Second, people work to ensure that the evaluations they receive will confirm their self-views by systematically communicating those self-views to fellow group members. Finally, people use their self-views to guide the selection, retention, and interpretation of their experiences in groups. Through these processes (described further below), people increase the chances that their experiences in groups will validate and nourish their self-views.

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[1] Other authors have suggested that people actively construct social environments that suit their idiosyncratic preferences and agendas. For example, in his attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model, Schneider (1987) proposes that people choose groups whose members seem similar to them in personality, interests, and values (see also Pfeffer's [1983] organizational demography model). Also, in their group socialization model, Moreland and Levine (2000) acknowledge the reciprocal influence of individuals and groups and suggest that group members are most attracted to and more apt to remain in groups that they believe will satisfy their goals. Our formulation is unique in its emphasis on the role of people's self-views in this active construction process.

Self-categorization and self-verification theories also differ in their conceptualization of *why* people enter groups. Self-categorization theory's intellectual parent, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), holds that people seek group membership as a means of enhancing their self-esteem. This assumption has lost viability, however, owing to evidence that people sometimes identify strongly with groups that are disadvantaged and stigmatized (e.g., Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994; Turner, Hogg, Turner, & Smith, 1984), and they display a preference for groups that enjoy higher status than their own group (e.g., Hewstone & Ward, 1985; Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Furthermore, attempts to provide evidence that a desire for self-esteem motivates group membership have met with failure (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998).

In the wake of evidence discrediting the self-esteem hypothesis, Hogg and his collaborators (Hogg & Abrams, 1993; Hogg & Mullin, 1999) have suggested that people join groups to reduce uncertainty and to achieve meaning and clarity in social contexts. Related research (Grieve & Hogg, 1999; Mullin & Hogg, 1998) has buttressed this hypothesis with evidence indicating that when people are made less certain of themselves (e.g., by having them engage in an unfamiliar task), they display more self-categorization activity (e.g., by displaying ingroup bias). Be this as it may, as a motive for group membership, uncertainty reduction merely suggests that people will be motivated to enter groups to quell their feelings of uncertainty (e.g., Hogg & Terry, 2000). The uncertainty reduction motive says nothing about the types of groups people will choose to enter, nor does it specify how people respond behaviorally to their experiences within the groups they have entered.

In contrast, self-verification theory predicts *which* groups people will select (i.e., groups that confirm their negative or positive self-views), as well as how they are likely to react behaviorally and cognitively to their experiences in the groups they enter (i.e., by implementing the self-verification strategies mentioned earlier). The self-verification approach thus makes explicit a priori predictions regarding group-related activities about which self-categorization theory is silent.

In the context of this article, however, a more important advantage of self-verification theory

is that it suggests strategies for finding value in diversity. Because understanding the link between self-verification and the functioning of diverse groups requires some familiarity with self-verification theory, we provide a brief snapshot of the theory next.

SELF-VERIFICATION STRIVINGS IN NONGROUP SETTINGS: THEORY AND EVIDENCE

The roots of self-verification theory can be traced to the writings of the symbolic interactionists (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934), who held that people form self-views as a means of predicting the responses of others and making sense of the world. For example, just as a woman's belief that she is intelligent will allow her to predict that others will take her opinions seriously, it also will provide her with a set of hypotheses about her role in the larger society. Thus, self-views not only will figure prominently in predicting the reactions of other people, but they also will be instrumental in interpreting incoming information and guiding behavior. From this vantage point, self-views represent the "lens" through which people perceive their worlds and organize their behavior. As such, it is critical that these "lenses" maintain some degree of integrity and stability; otherwise, the visions of reality they offer will be shifting and unreliable. For these reasons, people are motivated to stabilize their self-views, and they pursue this end by working to bring others to see them as they see themselves (e.g., Lecky, 1945; Secord & Backman, 1965).

This reasoning suggests that the intended fruits of self-verification strivings—evaluations that confirm self-views—will be alluring for two reasons. First, self-verifying evaluations will bolster people's perceptions of psychological coherence by reassuring them that things are as they should be ("epistemic" concerns). Second, self-verifying evaluations will signal people that they are recognized as the persons they believe themselves to be, which will reassure them that their interactions will unfold smoothly ("pragmatic" concerns). This reasoning suggests that people will desire self-verifying evaluations, whether those evaluations are positive or negative. Furthermore, these benefits of self-verification should emerge in groups as well as in dyadic settings: whether self-verifying evalu-

ations come from one hundred persons or a single individual, they will reassure people that they are known and understood.

Thus, there are sound reasons to believe that people are highly motivated to obtain evaluations that verify their negative as well as positive self-views. Groups may offer a particularly rich source of self-verification, since group membership may provide verification of two distinct types of self-views. First, in the course of interacting with other group members, people may receive validation for their *personal* self-views—self-views that refer to unique properties of individuals that bear no necessary relation to group membership (e.g., warm, athletic). Second, mere membership in groups may validate people's *social* self-views—self-views that are based on membership in particular social categories (e.g., professor, democrat, workgroup; see Pinel & Swann, 2000).

We are not, of course, the first to suggest that people may derive psychological benefits from their membership in groups. Indeed, one could even argue that the desire for self-verification is nothing more than a special case of a more general preference for convergent thinking wherein others come to see target persons in ways that converge with the targets' self-views (e.g., Guilford, 1959, 1967). Such a suggestion, however, overlooks the fact that self-verification represents a uniquely powerful and emotionally compelling form of convergent thinking. Self-views not only constitute the psychological lenses through which people interpret their experiences, but they are also pragmatically crucial because they enable people to establish workable agreements about "who is who" in social interaction—agreements that provide the social psychological "glue" that holds social interaction together (e.g., Goffman, 1959; Swann, 1987). The self-verification approach thus helps explain why instances of convergent thinking that involve people's identities are so psychologically potent.

Our approach may also help explain why people prefer groups that are distinctive (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1998). Insofar as people join groups to make statements about themselves and therefore validate their social self-views, they prefer distinctive groups because the statements those groups make are especially clear. In fact, in the extreme case, a group that is indistinguishable from

other groups would say nothing distinctive about the self and, thus, would be nonverifying.

This discussion of the power of groups to provide verification of social self-views might trigger a sense of déjà vu among advocates of self-categorization theory. After all, in that both self-verification of social self-views and self-categorization provide people with a feeling of connection to groups, what is the difference between the two approaches? The key is that the two approaches offer unique understandings of *how* people connect to groups. When self-verification occurs, the flow of influence moves from the person, who enters the group with established self-views in need of verification, to the group. Also, self-verification theory states that the person's self-views play a critical role in guiding selection of the group, the identities that the person negotiates with other group members, and the meanings that the person attaches to his or her experiences in the group. From this vantage point, the group comes to be—in the person's mind or in reality—an *externalization* of the person's self-views.

In contrast, self-categorization theory suggests that the flow of influence moves in the opposite direction, such that the person internalizes the pre-existing values and goals (i.e., "prototype") of the group. Thus, the self-categorization framework assumes that the group dictates the terms of the person's connection to the group; the group and the values it represents are implacable and cannot be shaped by the individual. The group member can only decide whether or not to identify with the group, a decision that will theoretically be determined by the extent to which the person is "perceptually ready" to internalize the particular social category associated with the group (Haslam, 2001).

A key quality that distinguishes a self-verification versus a self-categorization approach to groups, then, is self-verification theory's suggestion that people may join groups in an effort to acquire verification for their personal and social self-views. In what follows we summarize evidence of several distinct strategies through which they pursue this goal (for a recent review, see Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2002).

Choice of Self-Verifying Opportunity Structures

For decades, observers have noted anecdotal evidence indicating that people seek occupa-tions and other social contexts that provide an optimal fit for their self-views (e.g., Englander, 1960; Secord & Backman, 1965; Super, 1966). Recent investigations in controlled laboratory settings have provided complementary support for this idea.

For example, Swann, Stein-Seroussi, and Giesler (1992) asked participants with positive and negative self-views whether they would prefer to interact with evaluators who had favorable or unfavorable impressions of them. Contrary to the common assumption that people always prefer and seek those who adore them, those with positive self-views preferred favorable partners, and those with negative self-views preferred unfavorable partners.

More than a dozen replications of this effect using diverse methodologies have confirmed that people prefer self-verifying evaluations and interaction partners. Both men and women display this propensity, even if their self-views happen to be negative and even when the dimension is relatively immutable (intelligence). Moreover, when people choose negative partners over positive ones, they are not doing so merely to avoid positive evaluators whom (they believe) they are apt to disappoint. To the contrary, people choose negative partners even when the alternative is participating in a different experiment (Swann, Wenzlaff, & Tafarodi, 1992).

Psychological and Physical Withdrawal from Nonverifying Relationships

Just as self-verification strivings influence the contexts people enter initially, so too do they influence whether or not people will remain in those contexts. Research on married couples, roommates, and workgroups suggests that people gravitate toward partners who provide verification and drift away from those who do not. For example, people who wind up in marriages in which their spouses perceive them more (or less) favorably than they perceive themselves withdraw from the relationship, either psychologically (Burke & Stets, 1999; De La Ronde & Swann, 1998; Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994) or through divorce or separation (Cast & Burke, 2002). Moreover, when college students with firmly held self-views find that their current roommate perceives them more or less favorably than they perceive themselves, they make

plans to find a new roommate (Swann & Pelham, 2002). Finally, in a prospective study of the employment histories of over 7,000 people, Schroeder, Josephs, and Swann (2003) found that, for people with high esteem, turnover was greatest among those who failed to receive raises; for people with low esteem, turnover was greatest among people who received pay *increases*. Apparently, when faced with a choice between their negative self-views or high salaries, people with low esteem chose to retain their negative self-views.

Researchers have also uncovered preliminary evidence that people prefer verification for their *social* self-views. For example, members of low-status groups are sometimes quite reluctant to abandon firmly held identities, even when doing so would be highly advantageous. Witness Metcalf's (1976) study of Navajo women who moved to urban settings so that they could enjoy improved educational and financial opportunities. When they arrived in the city, these women found that they were required to give up their traditional dress, language, and ways of doing things. This caused them to feel so uprooted and cut off from their "true selves" (i.e., individuals who dressed and spoke like Navajos) that they expressed eagerness to return to their reservations, despite the hardships that awaited them there (see Pinel & Swann, 2000).

Considered together, these data show that people gravitate toward relationships and settings that provide them with evaluations that confirm both their personal and social self-views. Such tendencies have obvious implications for people's choice of groups, as well as their choice of relationship partners within those groups.

Evocation of Self-Confirming Reactions from Partners

In theory, people can ensure that they receive self-verifying reactions within groups by judiciously displaying *identity cues*. Ideally, identity cues are readily controlled and reliably evoke self-verifying responses from others. Physical appearances represent a particularly salient class of identity cues. The clothes one wears, for instance, can advertise numerous social self-views, including one's political leanings, income level, religious convictions, and so on. For example, people routinely display company or school logos, buttons, and bumper stickers and wear uniforms with an eye to evoking reactions that verify their personal and social self-views. Pratt and Rafaeli (1997; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993) found that dress, style, and fabric revealed a great deal about individuals' jobs, roles, and self-concepts. Even body posture and demeanor communicate identities to others. Take, for example, the CEO who projects importance in his bearing or the new employee who exudes naiveté. Such identity cues can be used to announce social self-views (e.g., group affiliations) as well as personal self-views.

Note that people should theoretically display identity cues to communicate negative as well as positive identities. Some highly visible examples include skinheads and members of the Ku Klux Klan. Of course, critics could point out that although such groups are held in low esteem by the larger society, the people who join them probably regard them quite positively. The results of a recent study by Gosling, Ko, Mannarelli, and Morris (2002) address this ambiguity. These investigators discovered that people structure their personal environments (e.g., bedrooms and offices) to communicate negative as well as positive identities to others. For example, just as people brought observers to recognize them as "closed" and "messy," they also brought them to see them as "open" and "tidy." Hence, it appears that people use identity cues to communicate their negative as well as positive self-views to others.

Even if people fail to gain self-verifying reactions through their choice of environments or through the display of identity cues, they may still acquire such evaluations through their overt behavior. Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, and Pelham (1992), for example, found that mildly depressed college students were more likely to solicit unfavorable feedback from their roommates than were nondepressed students. Moreover, students' efforts to acquire unfavorable feedback apparently bore fruit: the more unfavorable feedback they solicited in the middle of the semester, the more their roommates derogated them and planned to find another roommate at the semester's end.

If people are motivated to bring others to verify their self-conceptions, they should *intensify* their efforts to elicit self-confirmatory reactions when they suspect they are being misconstrued. Swann and Read (1981, Study 2) tested this idea

by informing participants who perceived themselves as either likable or dislikable that they would be interacting with people who probably found them likable or dislikable. Participants tended to elicit reactions that confirmed their self-views, especially if they suspected that evaluators' appraisals might *disconfirm* their self-conceptions. Therefore, participants displayed increased interest in self-verification when they suspected that evaluators' appraisals challenged their self-views.

People will even go so far as to stop working on tasks if they sense that continuing to do so will bring them nonverifying feedback. Brockner (1985) recruited participants with positive or negative self-views to work on a proofreading task. He then informed some participants that they would be receiving more money than they deserved (i.e., positive expectancies) or exactly what they deserved (i.e., neutral expectancies). Self-verification theory would predict that people's self-views would influence how they would respond to positive as compared to neutral feedback. This is precisely what happened in Brockner's study. Whereas participants with positive self-views worked the most when they had positive expectancies, participants with negative self-views worked the least when they had positive expectancies. Apparently, people with negative self-views withdrew effort when expecting positive outcomes because, unlike those with positive self-views, they felt undeserving.

"Seeing" More Self-Confirming Evidence Than Actually Exists

The research literature provides abundant evidence that expectancies (including self-conceptions) channel information processing (e.g., Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Shrauger, 1975). This suggests that self-conceptions may guide people's perceptions of their experiences in groups in ways that make those experiences seem more self-verifying than they are in reality.

Self-views may guide at least three distinct aspects of information processing. For example, Swann and Read (1981, Study 1) focused on selective attention. Their results showed that participants with positive self-views spent longer scrutinizing evaluations when they anticipated that the evaluations would be positive, and people with negative self-views spent longer scrutinizing evaluations when they anticipated that the evaluations would be negative.

In a second study the researchers linked self-views to selective recall. In particular, participants who perceived themselves positively remembered more positive than negative statements, and those who perceived themselves negatively remembered more negative than positive statements.

Finally, numerous investigators have shown that people tend to interpret information in ways that reinforce their self-views. For example, Markus (1977) found that people endorsed the validity of feedback only insofar as it fit with their self-conceptions. Similarly, Story (1998) reported that just as people with high self-esteem remembered feedback as being more favorable than it actually was, people with low self-esteem remembered it as being more negative than it actually was.

Together, such attentional, retrieval, and interpretational processes may systematically skew people's perceptions of their groups. For this reason, even when people happen to wind up in groups whose agendas are somewhat discrepant with their self-views, they may fail to recognize the discrepancy.

Therefore, the research literature suggests that people may strive to verify their self-views by gravitating toward self-confirming groups, by systematically eliciting self-confirming reactions within those groups, and by perceiving their experiences within groups in a self-verifying manner. These independent strategies of self-verification occur whether the self-views in question happen to be highly specific (e.g., athletic or sociable; Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989) or global (e.g., low self-esteem, worthless; Giesler, Josephs, & Swann, 1996).

Although people may enact each of these strategies of self-verification more or less simultaneously, the strategies also may unfold sequentially. For example, members of organizations may shift roles in the organization in an effort to find one in which they are apt to receive verification for their social and personal self-views. If this fails, they may strive to elicit verification for a different self-view (an employee who senses that his coworkers do not believe that he is intelligent might attempt to persuade them that he is at least reliable and dedicated). Failing this, they may implement various cognitive strategies of self-verification. And, failing

this, they may withdraw from the group, either psychologically or in actuality. Through the creative use of such strategies, people may dramatically increase their chances of attaining self-verification.

Moderator Variables

Researchers have identified several variables that moderate the magnitude of self-verification strivings. One such variable is people's investment in their self-views: people are more inclined to strive for verification of strongly held self-views (i.e., self-views that are important to them and that they are certain of; Pelham, 1991; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann & Pelham, 2002). Personality variables also may be important. For example, people who have personalities (e.g., blirtatiousness, extraversion) that increase the rate at which they express their personal qualities will be more apt to enjoy verifying reactions from others (e.g., Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001; Swann & Rentfrow, 2001).

Social situational factors may also moderate self-verification strivings. For example, a group atmosphere that is open and encourages freedom of expression should foster self-verification by encouraging people to express themselves freely.

Moreover, variables that increase the psychological significance of group membership should increase self-verification strivings (parallel to the manner in which the strength of people's self-views promotes self-verification). Witness, for example, Hixon and Swann's (1993) evidence that people were more apt to seek verification from interaction partners when they expected to interact with those partners for a substantial period of time. These data suggest that people may be more inclined to seek verification if they expect to be affiliated with the group for some time.

From this vantage point, attempts to determine if people prefer self-verification in group settings should examine actual groups that members expect to remain in for some time. This means that one would not expect substantial amounts of self-verification in studies of nominal groups, such as the minimal groups featured in much past research on self-categorization. At the same time, one would expect self-verification to occur in groups of MBA students who expected to remain together for several months.

The research featured in the next section tested the latter hypothesis.

SELF-VERIFICATION IN DIVERSE GROUP SETTINGS

Swann, Milton, and Polzer (2000) followed a group of MBA students for a semester. Their measure of personal self-verification was the extent to which individuals brought other group members to see them as they saw themselves (i.e., congruently) over the first nine weeks of the semester. Late in the semester, these researchers assessed participants' feelings of connection to the group (i.e., group identification, social integration, and emotional conflict), as well as performance on creative tasks (e.g., tasks that benefited from divergent perspectives, such as devising a marketing plan for a new product or determining how to increase the productivity of a failing corporation). They discovered that self-verification was related to both feelings of connection and creative task performance. Moreover, in addition to the direct link between verification and performance on creative tasks, there was also evidence that feelings of connection to the group partially mediated the relationship between verification and performance on creative tasks. Finally, verification of personal self-views was linked to feelings of connection to the group and performance, and this was true whether the self-views happened to be negative or positive.

Apparently, when group members had their unique attributes and perspectives verified, they felt recognized and understood. Such feelings emboldened them to offer creative ideas and insights they might otherwise have felt too inhibited to share. In addition, feeling known and understood by the group may have increased motivation to cooperate with one another by making members identify more with the group.

Self-categorization theory cannot accommodate Swann et al.'s (2000) evidence that verification of participants' personal self-views increased identification with their groups and fostered creative task performance (e.g., see Hogg et al., 1993). To the contrary, self-categorization theory would have predicted that *less* verification of personal self-views would have fostered identification with the group and creative

task performance.[2] But if Swann et al.'s (2000) findings fly in the face of self-categorization theory, they are roughly consistent with the spirit of research by Prentice, Miller, and Lightdale (1994).

In a study of members of eating halls at Princeton, Prentice et al. (1994) discovered that, in some groups, the extent to which group members liked one another was quite unrelated to how attached they were to the group in the abstract. They argued that this phenomenon might reflect the fact that, from the outset, these eating clubs were based on interpersonal attraction rather than commitment to the goals of the group.

In this connection it is worth noting that many of the studies that support self-categorization theory are either based on minimal groups (in which group members are completely unacquainted and are brought together for the explicit purpose of completing the experiment) or on groups in which personal relationships are de-emphasized, such as sports teams (e.g., Hogg & Hardie 1991). In both instances there is little that brings people together aside from their common goals, which could explain why self-categorization researchers have generally found that interpersonal attraction does not facilitate performance in such groups (e.g., Hogg & Haines, 1996). We suspect that this (presumably inadvertent) bias in the types of groups sampled by self-categorization researchers has led them to underestimate the importance of personal relationships in general and self-verification in particular. In the following section we review evidence indicating that the nature of personal relationships among group members can be important determinants of productivity in groups that are highly diverse.

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[2] Advocates of self-categorization theory could argue that the theory predicts depersonalization or self-stereotyping in intergroup contexts and personalization (seeing the self as a unique individual, as in self-verification effects) in intragroup contexts. Perhaps the climate in our study groups was intragroup in nature and therefore facilitated personalization. Nevertheless, this would not explain why self-verification effects were positively associated with connection to the group, when self-categorization theory would predict a negative association.

SELF-VERIFICATION AND THE VALUE IN DIVERSITY HYPOTHESIS

Polzer, Milton, and Swann (2002) investigated whether the self-verification processes identified by Swann et al. (2000) moderated the relationship between diversity and performance. They began by defining diversity as the amount of interindividual variability across several demographic and functional categories (e.g., sex, race, previous job function, area of concentration in the MBA program). They reasoned that the identity negotiation processes through which group members come to see one another as they see themselves might offset the tendency for categorical differences between group members to disrupt group processes. In particular, they predicted that verification of personal self-views would encourage diverse group members to apply their differences in knowledge, experiences, and perspectives to the tasks at hand (e.g., Ely & Thomas, 2001) and that this would help them translate their diverse qualities into exceptional performance on creative tasks.

Consistent with this, they found that self-verification achieved within the first ten minutes of interaction moderated the impact of demographic diversity on performance. Specifically, among groups that achieved high levels of self-verification, diversity facilitated performance. In contrast, among groups that failed to achieve substantial self-verification, diversity undermined performance. Thus, group members who quickly recognized the unique qualities of their fellow group members were optimally positioned to capitalize on the diversity in their group.

Polzer et al.'s evidence of links among self-verification, diversity, and performance are provocative, for they suggest that the failure of previous researchers to consider self-verification processes may explain why they obtained mixed support for the value in diversity hypothesis. Taken together, the effects of self-verification on performance demonstrated by Swann et al. (2000) and Polzer et al. (2002) raise a crucial question. Why did some diverse groups achieve high levels of self-verification in the first place?

Swann, Kwan, Polzer, and Milton (in press) attempted to answer this question. To this end, they proposed a model of the antecedents of verification in diverse groups. In the first step,

the positivity of group members' impressions of one another influences whether or not they *individuate* their fellow group members (i.e., perceive them as unique individuals). In the second step, individuation fosters self-verification (note that individuation does not *ensure* self-verification, however, because perceivers' may develop impressions that are individuated but that nevertheless clash with targets' self-views).

Why should relatively positive impressions foster individuation? Swann et al. (in press) reasoned that perceivers who have positive impressions of targets may be especially interested in talking to them and learning more about them (e.g., Dabbs & Ruback, 1987). For this reason, positive perceivers may be more apt to encounter, and pay attention to, information about the unique qualities of diverse targets—information that will provide a basis for individuation. As a result, among perceivers who are positively disposed toward targets, increments in target diversity should lead to increments in individuation. In contrast, perceivers who are neutral or negative toward targets may have little interest in learning about them (e.g., Dabbs & Ruback, 1987). Rather than individuate targets, such perceivers may simply place them in an undifferentiated category such as "coworkers I put up with" (e.g., Allport, 1954; Brewer & Miller, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).

Neutral or negative perceivers may be especially uninclined to individuate targets who are demographically or functionally different, since such differences may be threatening or anxiety producing to perceivers (Stephan & Stephan, 1985, 2000). These reactions may cause perceivers to suspend processing further information about targets (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). Indirect support for this reasoning comes from research indicating that when perceivers dislike targets who belong to other social categories, they are disinclined to make distinctions among them (e.g., Boldry & Kashy, 1999; Brauer, 2001; Judd & Park, 1988; Linville, Fischer, & Salovey, 1989; Park & Rothbart, 1982). When perceivers are relatively neutral or negative toward targets, then, more diversity may actually lead to less individuation.

The tendency for diversity to foster individuation when perceivers' initial impressions are positive is important in the present context, because the more perceivers individuate targets, the more targets should succeed in bringing per-

ceivers' appraisals of them into agreement with their own self-views. Simply put, more individuation will be associated with more self-verification.

Swann et al.'s (in press) results support this reasoning. These researchers discovered that when perceivers' initial impressions were positive, more group diversity was associated with more individuated inferences, but when perceivers' impressions were relatively neutral, more diversity led to less individuated inferences. Moreover, the extent to which perceivers individuated targets at the beginning of the semester predicted the degree to which they perceived them in self-verifying ways nine weeks later, such that more individuation led to more self-verification. Apparently, individuation is linked to self-verification, because perceivers will verify the self-views of targets only if they first recognize what targets' self-views (or qualities associated with them) are.

Swann et al.'s (in press) findings thus elaborate upon Polzer et al.'s (2002) evidence that self-verification fosters the performance of diverse groups. That is, positive impressions moderate the effect of diversity on individuation, which, in turn, fosters self-verification, enhanced feelings of connection to the group, and creative task performance.

THE VERIFICATION OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SELF-VIEWS IN DIVERSE GROUPS

Polzer et al.'s (2002) and Swann et al.'s (2000, in press) studies of MBA students provide evidence of a new pathway to harmony and performance in diverse groups—a pathway mediated by the verification of personal self-views. This research therefore complements recent work by Chatman and her colleagues (Chatman & Flynn, 2001; Chatman, Polzer, Barsdale, & Neale, 1998). Chatman and colleagues were likewise interested in developing a strategy for counteracting the potentially negative effects of diversity on performance. Based on self-categorization theory, they reasoned that fostering a collectivistic culture in diverse groups (thus verifying a social self-view) would reduce the salience of categorical differences among group members. In support of this prediction, they discovered that diverse groups that developed a collectivistic culture outperformed groups that developed an individualistic culture.

The work of Chatman and her colleagues, in conjunction with the findings of Swann et al. (in press), suggests that destructive intergroup categorizations (e.g., perceptions based on racial prejudice) can be reduced in two ways. On the one hand, Chatman et al.'s work suggests that negative categorizations can be replaced with collective categorizations that encourage group members to rally around their shared social self-view. On the other hand, Swann et al.'s research suggests that positive impressions can give rise to individuated perceptions that verify the personal self-views of group members (cf. Gaertner, Mann, Murell, and Dovidio's [1989] evidence that people can shift away from problematic intergroup categorizations either by emphasizing a superordinate social self-view or by decategorizing both the ingroup and outgroup through individuation).

Interestingly, a close look at Chatman et al.'s (1998) manipulation of collectivism suggests that it may have triggered some of the same processes that mediated Swann et al.'s findings. By increasing interaction and reducing conflict, the emphasis on the superordinate identity of the group may have increased the positivity of participants' impressions of one another, and such positivity may have, in turn, fostered individuation and self-verification (e.g., Swann et al., in press). In addition, because collectivism is theoretically associated with "other focus" and individualism is associated with "self-focus" (e.g., Bakan, 1966), the collectivism manipulation, by encouraging people to focus on one another, may have fostered individuated appraisals (and, thus, self-verification).

This discussion of possible mediators of Chatman et al.'s findings suggests that validating the personal self-views of members of diverse groups may not undermine group functioning, as suggested by self-categorization theory. That is, self-categorization theory assumes a hydraulic relationship between different levels of self-knowledge such that increasing the salience of one level of categorization (e.g., personal self-views) will necessarily decrease the salience of other levels of categorization (e.g., social self-views).

We argue, however, that as long as *personal* self-views are not incompatible with *social* self-views, verifying one class of self-views does not preclude verifying the other class of self-views. To the contrary, members of groups may enjoy

verification of both personal *and* social self-views. For example, the tendency for new group members to become more bonded to the group as they receive verification for their social self-view as "group member" (which highlights commonalities such as shared work goals, shared work activities, and shared norms) may be *accompanied by* a tendency for other group members to simultaneously provide them with verification for personal self-views that reflect their unique qualities. People may therefore discard destructive intergroup categorizations because of increased verification of their social *and* personal self-views.

Ely and Thomas's (2001) recent study illustrates such simultaneous verification of social and personal self-views. These authors studied three professional services firms that had recruited and retained a culturally diverse workforce. Through interviews with the employees at these firms, they identified several distinct approaches to diversity in the workplace. Of greatest relevance here, in the "integration and learning perspective," unique qualities of different group members were viewed as assets and, thus, were openly discussed. Such discussions proved to be extraordinarily fruitful:

> This process communicated to all employees that they were valued and respected and encouraged them to value and express themselves as members of their racial identity groups. These aspects of the way they functioned afforded opportunities for cross-cultural learning, which enhanced the group's work (Ely & Thomas, 2001: 265).

Ely and Thomas discovered that, in groups that featured an integration and learning perspective, group members were not only committed to the ideals of the group (which focused their attention on their shared goals and activities) but also felt that they were known, understood, and valued by the other group members as individuals. In this instance, then, group members enjoyed verification of both their social self-views (associated with their shared membership in the group) and personal self-views (associated with idiosyncratic personal traits and membership in social categories other than the workgroup in question). Not surprisingly, from the perspective of self-verification theory, members of such groups performed quite well.

The results of Ely and Thomas's (2001) research support our suggestion that the verifica-

tion of personal self-views and the verification of social self-views are not always mutually exclusive, as suggested by self-categorization theory's principle of functional antagonism (e.g., Turner, 1985). Rather, verification of the two classes of self-views can occur independently. The result is that there are four possible configurations of personal and social self-view verification possible in workgroups. As we show below, each of these configurations will be associated with a distinctive type of attachment to the group.

Personal Self-Views Verified, Social Self-Views Verified

This is the configuration that was theoretically present in the organizations featuring an integration and learning perspective in Ely and Thomas's (2001) research. Compatibility between personal self-views and the goals and qualities of the group allows group members to enjoy verification of their personal and social self-views simultaneously. Verification of their personal self-views will make them feel known and understood, and thus increase their attraction to other group members as well as their commitment to the group. Quite independently, verification of their social self-views will increase their allegiance to and interest in remaining in the group.

Recall that self-categorization theorists would not consider this configuration viable. That is, proponents of the principles of functional antagonism and depersonalization assert that people cannot enjoy verification of distinct personal and social self-views simultaneously; insofar as people conceptualize themselves in terms of a social self-view (e.g., professor), they are less likely to think of themselves in terms of an unrelated idiosyncratic personal self-view (e.g., witty). We believe that many social and personal self-views are quite compatible and may even complement one another. Witness, for example, Swann et al.'s (2000) evidence that the more participants' personal self-views were verified by other group members, the more connected they felt to their groups.

As we note later in this article, the possibility that people can "have it both ways" has important implications for how one approaches diverse groups. Rather than mandate that all group members should "sign on" to a common

superordinate group identity, as suggested by self-categorization theory, our approach suggests that people can avoid this "one size fits all" approach and instead enjoy simultaneous verification for both personal and social self-views. This combination should be optimal for diverse groups engaged in creative tasks that benefit from divergent thinking, yet require disparate ideas to be integrated. Cross-functional task forces, top management teams, and other groups working on complex, interdependent tasks should be particularly apt to profit from such simultaneous verification of personal and social self-views.

Personal Self-Views Verified, Social Self-Views Not Verified

In such groups members will feel connected to the group because of their personal attachment to other group members. Nevertheless, because their social self-views are not verified, they may feel somewhat estranged from the group as an abstract construct. They may consequently fail to openly identify themselves with the group as a whole, and may fail to engage in some tasks associated with group membership.

Consider, for example, a member of a business school who studies organizational phenomena by constructing theoretical mathematical models. Because she loves the precision of quantitative models, she may feel greater intellectual affinity toward the economics department than her own school. She may express her ambivalence by failing to attend school meetings and by developing a strategic cough when reporting her school affiliation to others. Nevertheless, because her business school colleagues frequently verify her personal self-views (e.g., as intelligent, fun, etc.), she may feel attached to them and seek them out. Such verification of her personal self-views may thus encourage her to remain in the business school, despite her preference for the social self-view associated with another department.

From a self-verification standpoint (i.e., holding equal pragmatic considerations), whether or not she ultimately remains in the business school will be determined by the relative strength of two countervailing forces: the enjoyment of the personal self-verification she receives from her coworkers and the dissatisfaction with her membership in the business

school. As such, she will remain in the business school as long as nothing happens to alter the balance between these two influences. This combination should be optimal for groups when members work relatively independently on separate tasks (or subtasks) and do not require their efforts to be closely integrated. In such cases, highly talented "star" individuals may be brought together who are best suited to perform relatively independently (and can achieve extraordinarily high performance while doing so), even though they may not feel particularly connected to the group of which they are members.

Personal Self-Views Not Verified, Social Self-Views Verified

Members of such groups will feel committed to the group as an abstraction but feel alienated from the members of the group. Such feelings of detachment from other group members will produce some inclination to leave the group, but these feelings will be offset by the fact that group membership verifies an important social self-view.

Imagine, for example, the rigorous analyst who revels in his company affiliation but feels no connection to his coworkers. In this instance, a self-verification analysis suggests that the man will remain affiliated with the group insofar as nothing happens to upset the balance between the two sources of verification. This configuration may be optimal for group tasks that require rapid execution of routine subtasks, rather than creative input or divergent thinking.

Personal Self-Views Not Verified, Social Self-Views Not Verified

Membership in such a group will be characterized by lack of any feeling of connection to other group members or to the group in general. For example, consider the draftee who dislikes all aspects of the military and the military establishment, including other draftees. Unless there is a compelling reason to remain engaged in the group (e.g., the possibility of court martial), the individual will withdraw either psychologically or in actuality from such a group. There are no group tasks for which this combination is optimal.

WHITHER SELF-CATEGORIZATION THEORY?

In pointing out some of the limitations of self-categorization theory's treatment of diversity in groups, we think it is important to bear in mind that the theory has offered insightful analyses of ingroup/outgroup relations, as well as of the role of superordinate identities in overcoming strife between and within groups. Therefore, our intention here is not to question the existence or importance of the group-to-self flow of influence championed by self-categorization theorists, nor to suggest that people never change in response to their experiences in groups. An extreme example includes members of cults or other total institutions. Such persons clearly internalize, if only temporarily, the superordinate values of the group. And there are clearly many other instances in which groups coax or cajole their members into accepting ideas that are alien to their self-views. Witness the intensive training programs that many corporations use to socialize fresh recruits (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996).

We are, however, suggesting that the group-to-self influence process highlighted by self-categorization theory captures only a portion of the psychologically significant processes that unfold in groups. By assuming that, under optimal circumstances, people are passively influenced by implacable group members, the self-categorization approach overlooks the profound influence that people may exert on their experiences in groups. That is, armed with a powerful motive to verify their personal and social self-views, people may exert considerable control over the groups they join, the reactions they elicit, and the manner in which they process those reactions.

In this way, people may actively ensure that their experiences in groups are self-verifying ones. And once they have done so, they may be inclined to move beyond mere *compliance* with other group members to actually *identifying* with the other group members. Along with such identification will come a realignment in the way they approach their membership in the group—higher investment, a greater willingness to open up and take risks—the very qualities that fuel the creative process in groups.

From this perspective, the tendency for group members to align themselves with the superordinate goals of groups can play an important role in the formation of groups, especially dur-

ing the early stages. After all, if the social self-view associated with a group fits poorly with the prospective group member's values and beliefs, his or her membership in the group may be short-lived. But this is precisely our point: the group-to-self influence process championed by self-categorization theorists is typically embedded in a larger process in which the self plays an active role. In the section that follows, we suggest that acknowledging the active role of the self in teams and workgroups points to several new research questions.

REMAINING QUESTIONS

For those interested in the variables that determine the effectiveness of teams, the self-verification perspective points to several new research agendas. One general goal will be to examine how self-verification processes unfold in groups. Researchers have shown that individual perceivers form impressions of individual targets very quickly (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992, 1993), but we know relatively little about the fate of these initial impressions when perceivers are members of a group. Do perceivers observe the reactions of other perceivers to particular targets, use these observations to infer the impressions of these other perceivers, and update their own perceptions of targets accordingly? If so, such "contagion" could cause group members' appraisals of a particular target to converge over time. Depending on the veracity of the initial perceivers' impressions, this process could set in motion a reinforcing spiral of cognitive and behavioral activity that might systematically raise or lower the amount of verification enjoyed by targets—an outcome that could bear importantly on group functioning.

Factors that impede or distort the process of identity negotiation in groups deserve special attention. A commonplace example involves instances in which one or more perceivers underestimate a target's capability, causing the target to feel offended or insulted. Just as potentially problematic, however, are instances in which perceivers mistakenly impute abilities to targets that those targets lack. Targets may react to such incongruencies by masking their insecurities behind displays of compensatory arrogance, audacity, or superciliousness. Such reactions may systematically disrupt group functioning.

Although incongruencies may emerge in any group, they may be particularly common in diverse groups. For example, perceivers may use prejudicial stereotypes to form impressions of targets who are members of different demographic or functional groups. Meanwhile, targets from minority groups may be particularly apt to hold values and self-views that clash with the team's prevailing values, norms, and shared identity. The power deficits from which such targets often suffer may exacerbate their inability to elicit verification, and the poverty of self-verification that results may deter the minority members from expressing their unique ideas and, on those occasions when they manage to express their ideas, may diminish the recognition they receive from the group. In future work researchers might strive to identify the particular difficulties that members of minority groups have in attaining self-verification in diverse groups and test strategies for remedying these difficulties (e.g., Nemeth, 1986).

Demographic and functional differences may be particularly problematic when they are organized around clearly demarcated subgroups (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). When subgroups become salient, verification may well become the norm among members *within* a subgroup (based on individuation of ingroup members), whereas stereotyping and prejudice may characterize appraisals *across* subgroups (based on homogenization of outgroup members; Judd & Park, 1988; Park & Rothbart, 1982).

Earley and Mosakowski (2000) have demonstrated the negative consequences of such dynamics in multinational teams composed of two subgroups organized around members' nationalities. Although Earley and Mosakowski (2000) discuss the importance of member's nationalities to their self-identities, they do not explicitly consider the contribution of patterns of self-verification within these groups. Conceivably, difficulties grow out of a tendency for group members to receive verification only from members of their own countries. If so, further research should explicitly explore the impact of subgroups on self-verification processes. The results of such analyses may help identify potential threats to self-verification, and such information may, in turn, enable team leaders to take steps to ward off discord.

Identification of processes that distort the identity negotiation processes in diverse groups

should be complemented by efforts to uncover strategies for facilitating self-verification in these groups. One approach might be to teach group members to embrace select principles of multiculturalism (e.g., Takaki, 1993). For example, instead of glossing over or merely tolerating differences among themselves, group members may be taught to embrace those differences (cf. Chatman et al., 1998).

A central component of this approach will be constructing work environments that promote the verification of personal and social self-views. To this end, group leaders might attempt to cultivate a psychologically safe climate (Edmondson, 1999) that will encourage group members to express their viewpoints openly (within reason). They may also urge members to display respect and appreciation for the unique qualities of others and to individuate members of other groups rather than conceive of them as mere exemplars of a category. Group leaders should role model such behavior and be sure to strive to understand the antecedents of conflict, rather than react defensively to it. These guidelines should be especially important early in the life of groups, when identities are first being negotiated. They also may be important, however, when members of established groups strive to renegotiate an identity that had been agreed on earlier.

The goal of facilitating self-verification also may be approached through a task analysis. Such an analysis should focus on identifying the goals of the workgroup, the types of verification that are apt to facilitate those goals, and the forms of verification that are possible at various stages of group formation and maintenance. For example, tasks that are highly nuanced, vague, or underspecified tend to require more divergent thinking, whereas tasks that involve multiple, well-defined steps call for carefully orchestrated division of labor with relatively little divergent thinking. Our formulation suggests that verifying personal self-views should enhance divergent thinking, whereas verifying social self-views may increase the extent to which members identify with the group but will not necessarily foster divergent thinking or creativity. Research is needed to identify the match among task characteristics, the shared and unique abilities of team members, and the types of verification. Models of group performance that stress the importance of diagnosing a

group's task (e.g., Hackman, 2002; McGrath, 1984) could offer useful guidelines for this research.

More generally, although our focus in this article has been on small groups, the verification approach could also illuminate processes that unfold in larger organizations. For example, verification processes may, in part, mediate the successfulness of programs designed to maximize person-organization fit and other types of organizational socialization programs. Moreover, managers who appreciate the psychological importance of self-verification may be at an advantage in designing interdependent work, motivating employees or colleagues, or leading teams. One key goal here may be maximizing the flexibility of the organization in general and work environment in particular. Such flexibility may encourage workers to develop and express their unique preferences and work styles, and thus construct idiosyncratically skewed work environments that are exceptionally self-verifying. Such environments will, in turn, foster creativity and innovation.

Clearly, there is much to be learned about the nature and consequences of identity negotiation processes in diverse groups. We believe that pursuing these issues will yield rich dividends, for there are sound reasons to believe that the social psychological climate that prevails in groups will be a powerful determinant of innovation—even more powerful, perhaps, than the abilities of individuals who make up the group. This assertion brings us back to a central theme in the world history with which we opened this article (i.e., Diamond, 1997). Diamond contends that it is mistaken to assume that great leaps forward in human technology occurred when brilliant people had dazzling insights, for the earth has always been populated by brilliant people, but there have been precious few great leaps forward. Instead, he concludes that major advances occurred when conditions ensured that people communicated and integrated distinctive ideas and unique perspectives. In this tradition, we suggest that the communication of distinctive ideas and unique perspectives is as essential to innovation today as it has been throughout human history. Furthermore, we suggest that the verification of personal and social self-views represents a particularly potent strategy for achieving such communication patterns.

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