The Intersection of Self-Evaluation Maintenance and Social Identity Theories: Intragroup Judgment in Interpersonal and Intergroup Contexts

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Abstract:

In two studies, the authors explore the integration of the self-evaluation maintenance (SEM) model and social identity theory (SIT) by focusing on each perspective's predictions for the evaluation of members of one's ingroup. SEM's predictions apply to personal identity concerns, whereas SIT's predictions are applicable to concerns for a group identity. In Study 1, participants evaluated an ingroup member who highly outperformed them. High- and low-identified participants did not differ in the irratings of the target in an interpersonal context but high identifiers did like the target more than lows in an intergroup context. In Study 2, highly identified participants preferred a poorly performing target in an interpersonal context, but in an intergroup context, they preferred the one who outperformed them. Results are discussed in terms of the theoretical overlap between SEM and SIT and how self-categorization theory can help integrate interpersonal and intergroup perspectives on self-evaluation.

Article:

Festinger (1954) introduced the idea that the performances of others influence one's own self-evaluation. We attempt to integrate two theoretical perspectives that build on social comparison theory: the self-evaluation maintenance (SEM) model (Tesser, 1988) and social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel &Turner, 1986) .Both theories address the relationship between social comparison processes and self-evaluation. The critical difference, however, is that SEM focuses on interpersonal relations and the evaluation of the self as an individual, whereas SIT focuses on intergroup relations and the self as a group member.

In the spirit of Mackie and Smith's (1998) call for theoretical integration of interpersonal and intergroup phenomena, we present two studies that explore the intersection of SEM and SIT. We focus on the SEM concerns that arise when an ingroup member outperforms the self. An outperforming ingroup member threatens one's self-evaluation as an individual but it boosts the evaluation of one's ingroup. We propose that two factors determine how people evaluate the ingroup member in this situation: how the self is categorized (at the interpersonal or group level) and the level of identification with that group when the self is categorized as a group member. Our most basic argument is that when the context is interpersonal, SEM predictions apply, whereas SIT predictions are applicable to intergroup contexts.

SELF-EVALUATION IN AN INTERPERSONAL CONTEXT

Tesser's (1988) SEM model "assumes that (1) persons behave in a manner that will maintain or increase self-evaluation and (2) one's relations with others will have a substantial impact on self-evaluation" (pp. 181-182). Exactly how a relationship with another person affects self-evaluation depends on three interactive factors: the self-relevance of the comparison dimension, the other's performance on that dimension relative to one's own,
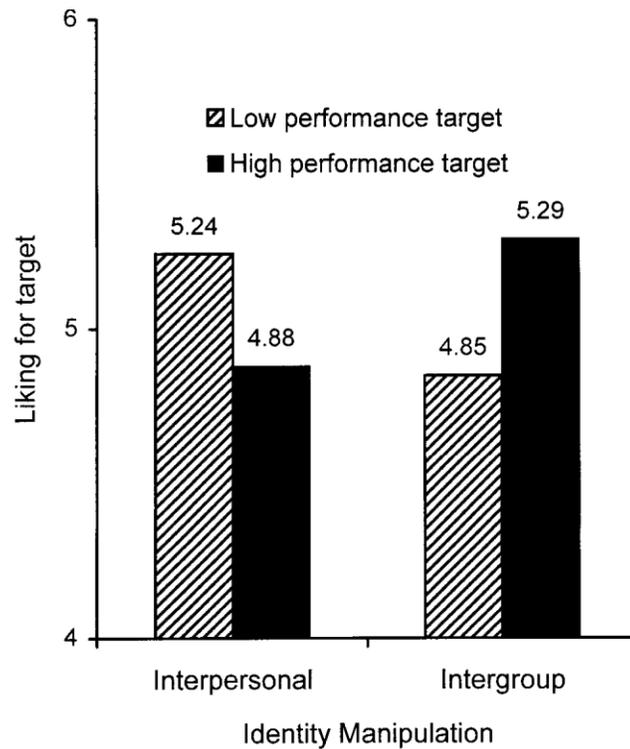
Figure 2   Effects of target performance and level of comparison on evaluations of the targets: Study 2.
NOTE: Higher numbers indicate more positive evaluations. $n = 17$ per cell.

selected for the study. Participants responded to the 15-item gender group identification (= .85) measure using a 1 to 7 Likert response scale. We also pretested participants for the relevance of creativity to their personal identities using the average response to three items (= .89) on a 1 to 7 Likert scale (e.g., "My ability to be creative is relevant to my identity as a person"). We then selected participants for the study if they were both high in gender group identification (in the top third of the distribution, $M = 6.15$) and in creativity relevance (the mean of the three items was greater than 5) .Gender group identification and relevance of creativity were uncorrelated. The study design was a 2 (personal vs. group identity context) x 2 (target performance) mixed factorial where the target performance factor was within-subjects.

PROCEDURE
The procedure of Study 2 was identical to that of Study 1, except in the following ways. The comparative context was manipulated as before, except that the statement suggesting that women perform more poorly on the test compared to men was excluded from the group identity condition. In addition, rather than evaluating a single outperforming target, participants evaluated both a highly performing female target (who correctly completed nine trigrams) and a poorly performing target (who correctly completed two trigrams). The self-descriptions included on the targets' questionnaires were counterbalancedwith performance. We measured desire for closeness as in Study 1 (= .93) and counterbalanced the order in which the participants evaluated the two targets. Once again, the test was appropriately difficult; participants answered very few trigrams correctly ($M = 2.68$ out of 12 possible, $SD = 1.17$).

Manipulation checks. Using 7-point scales, participants responded to the following item for the self and each target: "How well did you (this person) do on the creativity test?" (*extremely poorly* to *extremely well*).

Results and Discussion
MANIPULATION CHECKS

A repeated-measures ANOVA indicated that ratings of the self's performance, the high-performing target's performance, and the low-performing target's performance differed significantly, $F(2, 64) = 379.41, p < .001$. Simple effects tests indicated that the participants saw the high-scoring target ($M = 6.27$, $SD = 0.62$) as performing much better than the low-scoring target ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 0.67$), $F(1, 33) = 997.33, p < .001$. Participants' perceptions of their own performance did not differ from their perceptions of the low-scoring target's performance, $F(1, 33) < 1$, whereas the high-scoring target's performance was evaluated more positively than their own ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.02$), $F(1, 33) = 374.0, p < .001$.

DESIRE FOR CLOSENESS

Given that all of the participants in this study were highly identified with their gender group, we predicted a two-way interaction between the comparison level manipulation and target performance. ANOVA indicated that the interpersonal-intergroup comparison manipulation and target performance interacted to influence desire for closeness, $F(1, 32) = 7.39, p < .05$. As planned, we then tested the effect of target performance within each condition using two orthogonal mixed-model simple effects tests. As shown in Figure 2, participants in the intergroup condition preferred the high-scoring target ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.13$) over the low-scoring target ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.11$), $F(1, 32) = 4.48$, $p < .05$. This supports SIT's prediction that high identifiers like ingroup members who enhance the group's identity compared to those ingroup members who harm it. However, the reverse pattern emerged in the interpersonal condition, where participants tended to prefer the low-scoring target ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 0.74$) over the high-scoring target ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.89$), $F(1, 32) = 2.99$, and the degree of closeness with the other person. When the dimension of comparison is irrelevant to one's sense of personal self, a reflective process is activated in which one can bask in the reflected glory of a close other's good performance (Cialdini et al., 1976), resulting in a positive self-evaluation. Conversely, one can suffer a blow to the self when a close other fails. When the performance dimension is relevant to the self, however, a comparison process occurs in which one's own performance is evaluated relative to the performance of close others. If a close other outperforms the individual in a self-relevant area, self-evaluation will suffer. Likewise, when a close other's performance is similar to or lower than the individual's own performance, self-evaluation is protected or enhanced.

Other people who are not close to the self have minimal implications for self-evaluation in both the comparison and reflective processes. Thus, one can buffer the effects of a painful social comparison or the reflection of another's failure by distancing from the identity-threatening other. As Tesser (1988) writes, "when relevance is high, the better the other's performance the less closeness or the more distance one will put between the self and other" (p. 190). Conversely, a person also can protect or enhance self-evaluation by seeking closeness to others who perform similarly or worse than the self. In a test of SEM's predictions for how another's performance can affect liking of others, Pleban and Tesser (1981) had participants ostensibly compete in a "college bowl" game with a partner (actually a confederate). When the questions in the competition were self-relevant, participants disliked the confederate who outperformed them compared to the confederate who performed more poorly than the participant. When the questions were self-irrelevant, however, the participants preferred the high-scoringother to the low-scoring other. Thus, the experiment supported SEM's contention that people seek distance from or closeness to others to protect or enhance their sense of personal self.

EVALUATION OF SELF AND OTHERS IN AN INTERGROUP CONTEXT

At the heart of SIT is the idea that social group membershipsadd meaning to life and "define the individual's place in society" (Tajfel &Turner, 1986, p. 16). A person's social identity is that part of the self-concept that is derived from memberships in social groups and attachments to them. Similar to SEM, SIT assumes that people are motivated to see themselves positively but extends this motivation to include one's group memberships or "social identities." Also similar to self-evaluation in SEM, evaluation of one's group occurs through social comparison. Accordingly, a social identity is positive to the extent that it is seen as positively distinct from other salient groups in a given comparative context. The desire for a positive social identity is moderated by the level of group identification—the degree to which the group identity is integrated into the self-concept. Those who are low in identification with the group strive to protect their individual identities, whereas highly

identified group members are more likely to protect the identity of the group as a whole (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Doosje & Ellemers, 1997).

According to SIT, the motivation to have a positive social identity results in the tendency to favor one's ingroup and its members relative to outgroups and their members (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). However, this group-protective motivation also results in the differential evaluation of ingroup members according to their contribution to the group's positive distinctiveness (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell,1987). Those ingroup members who contribute positively to the group's identity are liked more relative to those whose attributes or behaviors harm the group's image. Indeed, ingroup members with negative qualities that harm the ingroup identity are liked even less well than outgroup members with similarly negative qualities (Marques & Paez, 1994). A number of empirical studies support the assertion that a group-protective motivation accounts for favoring ingroup members who contribute positively to the group's identity relative to those who harm it. This effect is limited to those dimensions relevant to the group's identity (Marques,Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988), only occurs among highly identified group members, and is especially pronounced when the ingroup's identity is threatened (Branscombe, Wann, Noel, &Coleman, 1993) or when ingroup members are motivated to assert their loyalty to the group (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2000) . In sum, SIT argues that intragroup evaluations reflect group-protective motivations.

INTEGRATING SOCIAL AND PERSONAL IDENTITY MANAGEMENT
Although SEM and SIT both assert that we strive to protect and enhance our identities, SEM focuses on protection of personal identity and SIT focuses on protection of group identity. SEM predicts that we psychologically distance ourselves from close others who represent a threatening social comparison and seek closeness to those who might offer a flattering downward comparison. However, in addition to arguing that we generally favor ingroups over outgroups, SIT predicts that we distance from poorly performing ingroup members and praise those who enhance the group's identity (Hogg & Hardie, 1991) .

Self-categorization theory (SCT) (Turner et al.,1987) extends SIT by stressing how the strategies we use to achieve and maintain a positive identity will depend on the social context and its effects on how the self is categorized. Thus, SCT suggests that two factors moderate evaluations of ingroup members based on their performance. The first is whether the nature of the social context is interpersonal or intergroup. In interpersonal contexts, people are concerned with their personal identity and should distance from an outperforming other. In intergroup contexts, however, one's level of group identification moderates intragroup evaluations. The meaning of an intergroup situation is very different for persons high or low in ingroup identification. Persons who are high in group identification care about preserving the group's positive identity. As a consequence, they should like others who contribute to the group's positivity. Persons who are low in identification, however, are unconcerned with that group's identity and work to protect their individual identity even in intergroup contexts. In short, people work to protect their personal identities as predicted by SEM, except when the context encourages group-level categorization and the person is highly identified with that category. When those two conditions are met, evaluation of others will reflect a concern for a positive group identity.

In this research, we test the predictions made by both SEM and SIT at their intersection-intragroupjudgment. Fellow ingroup members can affect self-evaluation at both the interpersonal level (through social comparison or social reflection) and the group level by either supporting or undermining a positive ingroup identity. In our first study, we test the effects of the nature of the comparative social context and level of group identification on the evaluations of an ingroup member who highly outperforms the participant. In Study 2, we test the differential effects of an ingroup member's inferior or superior performance in interpersonal and intergroup contexts.

STUDY 1
Female participants who were either high or low in their gender group identification were presented with failure feedback on a creativity task. Participants then evaluated a female target who had performed very well on the same task. To create an interpersonal versus intergroup context, we told half of the participants that we would

compare their individual score with the scores of other individuals and told the other half that we would compare the average score for women to the average score for men.

Based on self-categorization theory, we predicted that high- and low-identified women would like the target equally in the interpersonal condition but would differ in their liking for the target when an intergroup context made their differing levels of group identification relevant. Based on SIT, we predicted that highly identified women would like the high-scoring target more in the intergroup condition where the target's high performance enhances the group's identity than in the interpersonal condition in which her performance threatens their personal identity. Based on SEM, we predicted the reverse effect on liking among low identifiers: The intergroup manipulation will decrease liking compared to the interpersonal condition. Making the participant's and target's shared group membership salient increases closeness (via increasing similarity), making the comparison with the target's high performance even more threatening (Festinger, 1954; Tesser, 1988). Thus, low identifiers, who are concerned with their personal identity, will seek relatively more distance from the outperforming target in the more threatening intergroup condition compared to those in the interpersonal condition. Stated most simply, we predicted that high and low identifiers should not differ in their evaluations of others in an interpersonal context, but in an intergroupcontext, high identifiers will like a targetwho adds to the ingroup's positive identity more than will low identifiers.

Method
PARTICIPANTS AND DESIGN
Female undergraduates (*N*= 47) who had been pretestedfor theirlevel of gender group identification were selected for the study. Participants responded to a 15-item gender group identification measure (= .88) using a 1 to 8 Likert response scale (e.g., "I value being a member of my gender group" and "My gender group is central to my identity"). Items were averaged to create a gender identification score. Participants were selected from the extremes of the gender identification distribution to form high (*M*= 7.41, *n*= 25) and low (*M*= 4.06, *n*= 22) identification groups, $F(1, 45) = 8.51, p < .01$. The design was a 2 (level of group identification) x 2 (personal or group context) between-subjects factorial.

PROCEDURE
Coverstory. Participants individually met with a female experimenter who explained that the study involved the completion of a measure of creativity. To maximize the relevance of their test performance, the experimenter added that the test was well validated byyears of research and was highly predictive of general intelligence and academic performance.

Level of categorization. In the interpersonal comparison condition, the experimenter went on to say,

We are particularly interested in how different individuals perform on the creativity test, so when the study is complete, we will look at your score along with other information about you to help us understand what personal characteristics might be related to creativity and intellectual ability.

In the intergroup comparison condition, however, she said,

We are particularly interested in how men and women might perform differently on this test, so when the study is complete, we will add your score to those of other women and take an average and compare that with the average for men. We hope that this information will help us understand if men and women might differ in creativity and intellectual ability.

To increase concern for group identity among participants in the intergroup condition, the experimenter added, "Some researchers have suggested that men might slightly outperform women on this task."

Task feedback. Before completing the performance task, participants answered a few questions about themselves, including their gender and other personal information such as what they liked to do in their spare time and their favorite subjects in school. These questions were included to help disguise the true purpose of the study. On the back of this questionnaire was the creativity test, which consisted of 13 difficult trigrams. For

each trigram, participants had to find a word that fit with three others (the trigram). For example, the answer to "room, snow, base" would be "ball." When instructed, the participant turned over the form and began the task. After 5 minutes had elapsed, the experimenter stopped the participant and scored the form in front of her. The experimenter left the participant's scored test out on the table so that it was visible during the rest of the study. The task was appropriately difficult; participants answered very few trigrams correctly (M= 3.64, SD = 1.80, out of a possible 13) .Controlling for the actual performance did not alter the results in Study 1 or Study 2 and will not be discussed further.

Evaluation of the target. The experimenter told participants,

For the next part of the study, you will read about someone who participated in the study previously. You are going to pick one of the questionnaires out of this folder—each one was filled out by another participant in this study.

To reinforce the interpersonal or intergroup comparison manipulation, in the interpersonal condition, the experimenter went on to say,

Their test scores and other information will be a part of the same analysis that yours will—where we look at how different people's personal characteristics are related to creativity and intellectual ability.

However, in the intergroup comparison condition, she said,

This person's test score will be a part of the same analysis that yours will—where we compare the average score for women and the average score for men to see if men and women might differ in creativity and intellectual ability.

The participant was then instructed to draw one completed questionnaire from the folder. The questionnaire chosen by the participant always described a female target who answered 9 out of the 13 trigrams correctly— highly outperforming all participants.

Closeness measure. The experimenter then gave the participant a new questionnaire to complete that asked about the participant's impressions of the target. We measured desired closeness with the average response to eight statements to which the participants responded using a 1 to 7 Likert scale (= .92) .The statements were as follows: "I like this person," "This person is the kind of person I would like as a roommate," "This person is someone I would like to be closer to," "This person is the kind of person I would like to know better," "This person is someone I would like to have as a close friend," "I would like to meet and interact with this person," "I feel like I am personally similar to this person," and "This person and I have many things in common."

Perceptions of performance. To ensure that participants perceived their own performance as poor and the target's as very good, we measured perceptions of performance using 7-point scales ranging from *extremely poorly* to *extremely well*. Participants responded to the question "Howwell did you (the person you read about) do on the creativity test?" As intended, participants perceived their performance as much worse (M= 2.15, SD= 1.32) than that of the target (M = 6.15, SD = 0.66), $F(1, 43) = 296.45$,$p < .001$. Level of comparison and group identification did not influence performance evaluations.

Results and Discussion
An ANOVA confirmed our prediction that the interpersonal-intergroup comparison manipulationand gender group identification would interact to influence evaluation of the target, $F(1, 43) = 8.53$,$p < .01$. We then tested the three predicted simple effects using Holm's (1979) sequentially rejective multiple test procedure to control Type I error. The Holm's procedure generates adjusted p values for each comparison. Of the contrasts of interest, the one with the smallest p value is tested against /k, where k is the number of contrasts. The second smallest$p$value is tested against /(k–1), the third smallest against /(k– 2), and so forth. Reported ps are adjusted for the Holm's correction.

As shown in Figure 1, in the personal identity condition, group identity was irrelevant: High (M= 4.91, SD = 0.67) and low identifiers (M= 4.77, SD= 0.77) did not differ in evaluation of the target in the interpersonal condition, $F(1, 43) < 1$. However, in the intergroup condition, high identifiers ($M = 5.51$, $SD = 0.58$) liked the target more than did the lows (M= 4.08, SD= 0.95), $F(1, 43) = 19.87$, $p < .001$. Consistent with SIT, high identifiers tended to like the high-scoring target more in the intergroup condition (where she reflects positively on the group's identity) than in the interpersonal condition (where she represents a threat to personal identity), $F(1, 43) = 3.84$, $p = .068$. Consistent with SEM, low identifiers tended to like the target less in the group identity condition than in the personal identity condition (where shared group membership makes the target's performanceeven more threatening to personal identity), $F(1, 43) = 5.14$, $p = .056$. Thus, the nature of the comparative context moderated the effects of identification on evaluations of an overperforming target.

STUDY 2
Study 2 further examined the importance of the comparative context as a moderator of intragroup judgment. Although Study 2 used a similar procedure as Study 1, it differed in several important ways. Unlike the previous study, Study 2 included evaluations of both an overperforming and an underperforming ingroup target. Including both types of targets allowed a more complete test of the hypothesis that SEM applies to interpersonal contexts, whereas SIT applies to intergroup contexts. The crucial test of this idea rests on an in-depth examination of highly identified group members because it is only among high identifiers that preferences for ingroup members could actually reverse depending on the comparative context. In interpersonal contexts, a high-performing target represents a threatening interpersonal comparison, and thus, high identifiers should prefer a poorly performing target (SEM). In intergroup contexts, however, the poorly performing target threatens the ingroup's identity, and thus, high identifiers will prefer the highly performing target, who enhances the group's identity (SIT) .

One limitation of Study 1is that the intergroup context manipulation included a group-threatening element. Because threats to the ingroup enhance group-protective behavior, examining our hypotheses without the induction of group threat would test our ideas more conservatively. Accordingly, we made the intergroup comparison salient but did not suggest to our female participants that women were known to perform more poorly on the test than men. Another improvement in Study 2 was the inclusion of a pretest measure of the self-relevance of creativity as a performance dimension. Although it seems reasonable to assume that creativity and academic ability are relevant to college women, in Study 2 we selected women for whom creativity was a highly relevant personal attribute to give a clearer view of SEM processes.

In Study 2, highly identified women for whom creativity was self-relevant were given failure feedback on a cre-ativity task in either an interpersonal or intergroup context. Participants subsequently evaluated two other women: one who highly outperformed the participant and one who performed quite poorly. We predicted that these highly identified participants would prefer the poorly performing target in an interpersonal context and would prefer the highly performing target in an intergroup context.

Method
PARTICIPANTS AND DESIGN
Female undergraduates (N= 34) who had been pretested for their level of gender group identification were
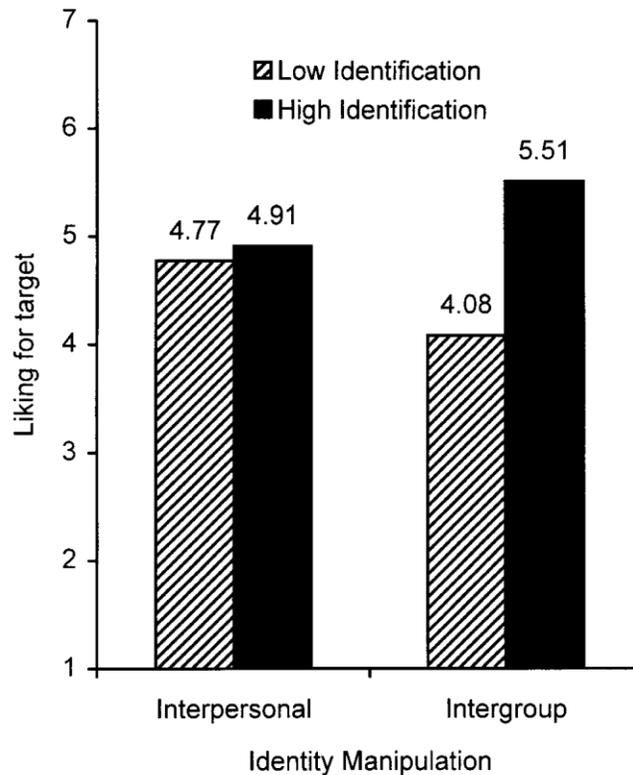
Figure 1 Effects of ingroup identification and level of comparison on evaluation of the target: Study 1.

NOTE: Higher numbers indicate more positive evaluations. $n = 11$ in each cell, except in the interpersonal condition for high identifiers, where $n = 14$.

$p = .09$. This supports SEM's prediction that persons manage their self-evaluation by distancing themselves from overperforming close others. In sum, Study 2 further supports our contention that the applicability of SEM and SIT theories depends on the nature of the social context.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In two studies, we tested predictions regarding the intersection of SIT and the SEM model. We found that evaluations of other ingroup members depended on the nature of the comparative social context and the degree to which participants had incorporated the group into their self-concepts. In Study 1, high and low identifiers in an interpersonal context did not differ in their evaluations of an outperforming group member. However, in an intergroup context, high identifiers sought greater closeness to the target, relative to high identifiers in the interpersonal condition. In contrast, low identifiers distancedfrom the target compared to lows in the interpersonal condition.

These results support the notion that in interpersonal contexts, high and low group identifiers share similar identity concerns. However, in intergroup contexts, their identity concerns differ. For high identifiers, intergroup contexts activate group-level identity concerns, and thus, ratings of other ingroup members are a function of the group member's contribution to the group's identity. For low identifiers, intergroup contexts may intensify personal identity concerns because the salience of shared group membership makes other ingroup members more relevant and potentially more threatening sources of interpersonal social comparison.

In Study 2, high identifiers in an interpersonal context preferred an ingroup target who supported their personal identity (by serving as a downward social comparison), whereas in an intergroup context, they preferred atarget who supported their group identity (by enhancing the ingroup's positive distinctiveness). More generally, we found that evaluations of others were consistent with the motivation to protect valued identities that were activated by the social context.

Our main theoretical point is not simply that the social context determines whether people are concerned with their personal or social identities but that SEM and SIT specify analogous psychological processes that operate at different levels of categorization. Thus, although SEM and SIT appear to make differing predictions, the concept of self-categorization (Turner et al., 1987) helps to demonstrate the general processes of socialjudgment that they have in common. The theoretical overlap of these two perspectives should not be surprising considering their common roots in social comparison theory. Both theories emphasize that the value of our identities, be they personal or social, is determined through social comparison. In other words, we evaluate the personal self via comparisons with other individuals and evaluate our group memberships via comparisons with other groups.

Self-categorization theory helps delineate when each comparative process will take place: When the self is categorized at the individual level, we compare ourselves with other individuals, but when the self is categorized at the group level, we compare the ingroup with outgroups. Thus, the same targets can have very different implications for self-evaluation depending on how the self is categorized. Consequently, attempts to protect or enhance a positive self-evaluation through the evaluations of others also will differ depending on the level of self-categorization. Indeed, we found that different comparativecontexts resulted in very different evaluations of the same targets.

Another important theoretical overlap between SEM and SIT is the notion of relevance of the comparison dimension. At the personal level, close others who outperform us only represent a threat to the self when that performance occurs on dimensions that are self-relevant (Pilkington, Tesser, &Stephens, 1991; Tesser, 1988; Tesser, Millar, Moore, 1988). Similarly, comparisons between the ingroup and an outperforming outgroup are only threatening when the comparison occurs on dimensions relevant to the ingroup's identity (Ellemers, Van Rijswijk, Roefs, &Simons, 1997). Furthermore, because both SEM and SIT are dynamic models, they predict that threatening social comparisons can influence the content of both personal and social identities. A threatening interpersonal comparison from a close other can reduce the self-relevance of that performance dimension (Tesser, 1988) . Similarly, through social creativity, group members protect their group identity by decreasing the importance of dimensions on which they do not excel and increasing the importance of those on which they are superior (Lemaine,1974; Mummendey & Schreiber, 1984; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The concept of closeness offers another potential point of intersection between interpersonal and intergroup theories. SEM argues that we distance ourselves from individuals who represent threatening upward social comparisons on dimensions relevant to our personal identities. Similarly, SIT research has confirmed that we dislike outgroups who represent upward social comparisons on dimensions relevant to the group's identity (Branscombe & Wann, 1994) . Conversely, harmonious relationships are likely to exist among individuals or groups whose positive attributes lie on different comparative dimensions (van Knippenberg, 1978) . Thus, although the theories were developed to explain different levels of identity management, their constructs and predictions are essentially the same, differing only in the level of identity to which they apply.

Limitations and Future Directions
Although our results were consistent with predictions, the present research does have its limitations. For instance, we did not offer direct evidence that our results were due to the self-esteem protection motives that are central to both SEM and SIT. However, confirming predictions derived from two distinct theories that assume such a motivation give us confidence that self-protection offers the most parsimonious explanation for the observed pattern of effects. Future research on the intersection of SEM and SIT could address this issue by manipulating the participant's performance. We would predict that when the participant's performance was very good, patterns of intragroup evaluation that protect personal identity would disappear or at least be attenuated. However, we would predict that participant performance would not affect intragroup evaluations when group identity concerns are activated. Such a pattern of effects would bolster our contentions that self-protection motives do affect evaluations of others and that personal and group identity concerns are independent.

Second, although we manipulated whether the context was intergroup or interpersonal, we did not directly measure participants' level of self-categorization. Although the effects we observed are not easy to explain without this assumption, future research in this area could profit from the inclusion of measures of self-categorization.

Last, we did not obtain behavioral measures of approach or avoidance but instead relied on the kinds of psychological closeness measures used previously in this literature (Pleban & Tesser,1981) .Field research on natural groups could provide the opportunity for the collection of behavioral measures of closeness (e.g., whom people socialize with).Future research addressing some of these limitations can only help to further integrate intergroup and interpersonal theories.

CONCLUSIONS

Although social psychologists often view interpersonal and intergroup theories as competing approaches, we demonstrated that they are compatible to the extent that they specify similar psychological processes operating at differentlevels of categorization. Two studies demonstrated the importance of the level of categorization as a moderator of the effects of social comparison on the evaluations of others. We found evidence supporting the idea that different identity concerns arise depending on the nature of the comparative context. When the context was interpersonal, participants responded in ways consistent with personal identity protection. When the context was an intergroup one, high identifiers responded in ways that protect the ingroup's identity. Thus, attempts to protect or enhance a positive self-evaluation can have different consequences for the evaluations of others depending on the level of self-categorization. Despite the apparent differences between SEM and SIT, self-categorization theory integrates the main theoretical propositions of the two perspectives and highlights the remarkable similarity in the processes of social comparison and self-evaluation that they describe. We hope that this work inspires others to explore the similarities between interpersonal and intergroup theories.

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