PART 3

COPING WITH INCLUSION

Multiple Identities and the Paradox of Social Inclusion

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INTRODUCTION

Modern societies, and organizations within these societies, are characterized by increasing diversity and the coexistence of multiple groups. How to successfully manage this diversity has been the focus of much political debate and scientific research. One of the core goals of diversity-management strategies is to avoid schisms and conflict between groups. This will enable the achievement of a socially cohesive society in which members of all groups are included. Two opposing strategies to achieve social inclusion are commonly proposed: assimilation and multiculturalism (or pluralism; see Fredrickson, 1999 for an overview). Proponents of assimilation strategies argue that social cohesion can only be achieved when subgroup identities are relinquished (e.g., Barry, 2001; Schlesinger, 1992). However, in line with the multiculturalism ideology, we propose that the maintenance of subgroup identities is essential for the development of healthy identities and positive relationships with other groups (e.g., Berry, 2001; Lambert & Taylor, 1990). In this chapter, we provide an analysis of the consequences of assimilationist pressures for the individual, for the group, and for society at large. We review social psychological evidence bearing on this issue and conclude that far from promoting *social inclusion*, assimilationist pressures have the paradoxical effect of actually contributing to the *social exclusion* of minority group members.

THE IDENTITY THREATS OF ASSIMILATION

According to Berry and Kim (1988), minority-group members can adopt one of four different acculturation strategies when they enter a host society: they can choose to maintain their native cultural identity and develop

new relationships with the groups that are part of the host society (*integration*), they can choose to give up their native cultural identity and develop a new identity based on their membership in the host society (*assimilation*); they can choose to maintain their native cultural identity alone, without developing ties with the host group (*separation*); or they can give up their native identity without developing a new identity based on their membership in the host society (*marginalization*). Despite the variety of strategies preferred by minority group members, diverse societies often tend to promote one of these as the "best" for minority group members and for society as a whole. Societies that support multiculralism are those where minority group members are welcomed to endorse an integrative acculturation strategy, while assimilationist societies are those that require minorities to endorse an assimilation strategy.

One of the arguments surrounding the assimilationist ideology is thus that migrants can only be fully included in the host society if they relinquish their native culture and substitute it by the host culture. The idea is that the more minority group members endorse the values and norms of the host society, the better they will function within and serve this society. However, assimilationist ideologies also defend that the adequate endorsement of norms and values of the host society can only be achieved if minority group members distance themselves from their native culture. This is expected to result in greater similarity between minority group members and majority group members, which will presumably lead to smooth relationships between these groups, as well as to the inclusion of all groups within society at large.

However, besides the fact that this idea is based on the questionable assumption that greater intergroup similarity leads to smoother and less conflicting subgroup relations (see Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997 for evidence of the opposite effect), social psychological research suggests that this strategy presents several threats to the identity of minority group members. These identity threats occur because people are simultaneously members of multiple groups and thus hold multiple identities (e.g., Deaux, 1996; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). This creates the potential for the occurrence of identity discrepancies because the identities that are salient to perceivers, or that perceivers wish to impose on targets, are not necessarily the same identities that are salient to targets themselves or that targets wish to emphasize in a particular context (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Breakwell, 1983). For example, gender is a readily available categorization cue, leading perceivers to categorize targets according to their gender in a variety of contexts. However, targets do

not necessarily see themselves primarily according to their gender. This is largely due to the fact that, although social categorizations are heavily based on the characteristics of the stimuli present in a given social context, motivational factors also play a role in determining how people are categorized, and these motivational factors may lead to different categorizations for targets and for perceivers (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner et al., 1987). As a consequence, the same context may lead perceivers to categorize targets in one way, while it may lead targets to see themselves in quite a different way. So, following our example, while gender may be a salient categorization cue for perceivers, a given target may instead wish to stress his or her professional identity during a meeting with a client.

One important consequence of motivational processes in situations of identity discrepancy is that the way people describe themselves or express their identity may be quite strategic, instead of simply reflecting people's cognitive representations of their social group memberships (Deaux & Ethier, 1998). That is, in line with theories of impression management (Baumeister, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980), statements of identification may be seen as communicative tools through which people express how they wish to be seen by a particular audience (Barreto, Spears, Ellemers, & Shahinper, 2003; Ellemers, Barreto, & Spears, 1999). This is particularly likely to be the case when the target in question is confronted with an audience that represents some form of threat to their identity (see also Klein & Azzi, 2001; Reicher & Levine, 1994; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995).

A study we carried out among members of ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands serves to illustrate this point (Barreto et al., 2005). We compared how people described themselves in relation to different social groups and toward different audiences. Specifically, we asked participants to indicate the extent to which they identified with their ethnic minority group and the extent to which they identified with the host group (the Dutch). We examined how respondents communicated their identity to a native or host audience by varying the way the research group was presented (e.g., as Portuguese – we indicated the first author of this chapter as the responsible researcher – or as Dutch – we indicated the second author if this chapter as the responsible researcher), as well as by varying the language in which the questionnaire was written (native versus host/Dutch language). We approached members of a group that tends to be seen as separate and is continuously pressured to assimilate in Dutch society (Turkish migrants), as well as members of a group that is perceived as relatively integrated and is much less a target of assimilative pressures in this context (Portuguese migrants) (e.g., Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998). We reasoned

that since prior work in this same context has shown that migrants tend to endorse a dual identity, identifying with both the native and the host group (e.g., Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998), those migrant groups who are seen as separate and who are pressured to assimilate by the host society should experience a stronger identity threat than those who are seen as integrated. As a consequence, we expected Turkish migrants to experience more of a threat to their preferred dual identity than Portuguese migrants when confronted with a Dutch audience, and we expected this to be reflected in a (strategic) greater endorsement of both native and host identities by our Turkish respondents when addressing a Dutch audience.

The Portuguese migrants in our sample (who experienced relatively little identity threat) smoothly adapted their identity to the relevant social context. That is, they indicated identifying more strongly with the native group when communicating with a native audience, but reported identifying more strongly with the Dutch when addressing a Dutch audience (cf. the alternate cultural model; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). However, a different response pattern was revealed by the minority group that experiences the greatest identity threat in this context. Indeed, when Turkish migrants faced an audience that represented a threat to their identity (i.e., when addressing a Dutch audience) they claimed their preferred (dual) identity – that is, they indicated identifying more strongly with *both* native and host groups to the host audience than they did to the Turkish audience. That is, when addressing the audience that pressures them to assimilate and give up their minority identity, Turkish respondents made it clear that they are indeed very Turkish, but that this does not get in the way of also endorsing a Dutch identity. We think these results demonstrate that assimilative pressures are threatening to the identity of minority groups and that pressuring minority groups to assimilate can have the paradoxical result of causing them to strategically emphasize their minority identity, or a dual identity. Importantly, these results also show that minority group members are much less likely to place such a strong emphasis on their dual identity in contexts where they do not experience such an identity threat (as did our Turkish participants in the Turkish context).

In sum, our central concern is that minority group members who are targets of assimilative pressures are confronted with an imposed superordinate categorization at the level of the nation, while they may see themselves primarily on the basis of their ethnic identity, or (more often) as holders of a dual identity (e.g., Berry, 1990; Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). This introduces an identity discrepancy that can be experienced as a threat. In particular, assimilative pressures present a threat to the *distinctiveness*

of the subgroup's identity (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b) because they prevent or undermine the distinctiveness of the subgroup (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Breakwell, 1983). In addition, assimilation policies threaten feelings of *subgroup respect* because they communicate a disregard for the value of the subgroup's identity (Huo & Molina, 2006). Finally, assimilation pressures threaten minority group member's *self-definition* (categorization threat) because they impose external definitions of the self while disregarding people's preferred identities (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003; Branscombe et al., 1999; Breakwell, 1983; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002).

In this chapter, we review evidence suggesting that assimilative pressures lead to the identity threats outlined earlier, which, in turn, have a negative impact on social cohesion and on the inclusion of all groups in a superordinate category. Specifically, we argue that this is the case for three reasons:

1) Because assimilation pressures promote conflict between minority and majority group members, they *weaken the ties between minority group members and the host society*.
2) Because assimilation pressures are disrespectful of minority group members' identity, they have *negative psychological consequences for minority group members*.
3) Because assimilation implies inclusion in a superordinate category that is not representative of minority group members, the identity-management strategies such members have to use to succeed (e.g., "passing" as a member of the majority group) *accentuate their disadvantage*.

ASSIMILATION PRESSURES LEAD TO INTERGROUP CONFLICT AND WEAKEN TIES WITH THE SUPERORDINATE CATEGORY

Past research has emphasized the importance of defining a common, superordinate identity as a means of avoiding intergroup conflict (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989) and to enhance cooperation between members of different subgroups (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Wit & Kerr, 2002). However, other research has revealed that full assimilation into a single superordinate category is not necessarily the best strategy. Instead, in support of the multiculturalism view, research has shown that the most positive subgroup relationships are achieved when emphasis is placed both on subgroup identities and on the

superordinate identity (Gaertner, Rust, Dovidion, Bachman, & Anastasio, 1994; Haunschild, Moreland, & Murrell, 1994; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a; Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001). That is, defining people's relationships to each other both in terms of the common superordinate category and in terms of their different subgroup identities leads to better subgroup relationships than a sole emphasis on the superordinate identity (or a sole emphasis on the subgroup identity). In fact, some of this research suggests that a sole focus on the superordinate identity can actually lead to enhanced subgroup identification, which can be seen as an important precursor of ingroup bias and intergroup conflict (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a).

Such enhanced intergroup conflict and subgroup identification are seen as the result of the *distinctiveness threat* created by the erosion of subgroup boundaries (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b). According to Branscombe et al., (1999) a distinctiveness threat occurs when a group's distinctiveness is prevented or undermined in a particular context (see also Breakwell, 1983; Brewer, 1991). People seek group distinctiveness because it clarifies group boundaries and provides unambiguous cues as to where they belong and what norms they should follow (Tajfel, 1978; Turner et al., 1987). This need for group distinctiveness can be so strong that it is even more important than establishing a positive identity (Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996). Accordingly, past research has demonstrated that the erosion of group boundaries (implied by a comparison with a similar outgroup) leads group members to actively differentiate their group from the other group, for example by expressing greater ingroup bias or enhanced group identification (e.g., Jetten et al., 1997; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993; Van Rijswijk, Haslam, & Ellemers, 2006). This is in line with optimal distinctiveness theory, which clearly states that people seek to differentiate themselves or their group *only to the extent that does not threaten inclusion* in a higher-order category (Brewer, 1991). In fact, this is what is achieved when both superordinate and subordinate identities are emphasized in a multiculturalism approach.

Research on the effects of *subgroup respect* also suggests that the identity threats introduced by assimilation strategies can hurt subgroup relationships (Huo & Molina, 2006). Subgroup respect is a mechanism parallel to intragroup respect (as defined by Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996; Tyler & Lind, 1992) in that it refers to the perception that one's subgroup is respected by the people or institutions that represent a higher-order category, such as the nation. As had also been revealed in research on the effects of intragroup respect, the perception that one's subgroup is respected is a precondition for the acceptance of the superordinate category, as well as for the norms

it upholds (e.g., Huo, 2003; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996). By contrast, a lack of respect is associated with cognitive dis-engagement and withdrawal (Sleebos, Ellemers, & De Gilder, 2006).

Huo and Molina (2006) observed that ethnic minorities who perceive that their subgroup is respected in American society also reported more positive evaluations of other ethnic groups and evaluated America as a whole more positively. By contrast, those who perceived a threat to subgroup respect reported more negative evaluation of other ethnic subgroups. This research on subgroup respect suggests that respect is a two-way road: Only by receiving respect can group members, in turn, respect members of other groups as well as the (norms of the) inclusive category as a whole (see also Tyler & Lind, 1992).

Further evidence for the harmful effect of assimilation (versus the beneficial effect of multiculturalism) on the relationship with the superordinate group stems from an examination of the effects of *categorization threat*. Categorization threat has been defined as the threat that results from being categorized against one's will (Branscombe et al., 1999; Breakwell, 1983). This includes situations where one is categorized in a given group when one would prefer individualized treatment or when one would prefer to be categorized in another group (*unwanted categorization*). Past research showed that under these circumstances people do their best to communicate their disagreement with the categorization. For example, people who are categorized against their will try to undermine the usefulness of the categorization by pointing out within-group differences and identifying similarities between groups (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, & Paladino, 2000). Additionally, they will try to demonstrate the inappropriateness of the categorization by stressing the extent to which they differ from other ingroup members (Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). Indeed, people only endorse the (behavioral) norms of a group in which they are (externally) categorized when they also (internally) identify with that group (Barreto & Ellemers, 2000; Ouwerkerk, de Gilder, & de Vries, 2000). That is, belonging to a social category according to some objective or external criteria like birth place is not enough or even necessary for people to accept and follow the norms of this social category. Instead, research shows that people accept and follow the norms of social categories with which they subjectively identify, irrespective of whether they fulfill such objective or external membership criteria.

Researchers focusing on the acculturation attitudes of minority and majority group members have suggested that this type of identity threat can create a problematic or conflictual relationship with the host society

(Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997). Specifically, in their model of interactive acculturation, Bourhis and colleagues indicate that the quality of the relationship between migrant groups and the host society will depend on whether the acculturation attitude of the minority group is in line with the acculturation orientation of the host society (as defined by state policies). Problematic or conflictual relationships emerge when these acculturation attitudes are discrepant, for example, when the minority group endorses integration (i.e., the maintenance of the native culture and the development of ties with the host culture), but the host society promotes assimilation (which involves relinquishing the native identity and focusing exclusively on ties with the host society).

A specific consequence of categorization threat is that it often implies that people are not categorized in a group where they would prefer to be categorized (*identity neglect;* Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; 2003; Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, in press). Central to this approach is the consideration that people strive to have their preferred self-views respected by others (akin to a self-verification process at the collective level of self-definition, Swann & Read, 1981; Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004). That is, people will not only do their best to communicate their disagreement with unwanted categorizations (e.g., by distancing themselves from the imposed category), but they will also go to great lengths to affirm their preferred identities (e.g., by affirming their identification with the group or showing bias in favor of their preferred group; Finchilescu, 1986). As a consequence, imposing an unwanted identity while neglecting a preferred one is likely to backfire because it simultaneously elicits rejection of the imposed identity and affirmation of the neglected identity.

To empirically address this issue, we examined people's identification with and loyalty to an imposed category membership (such as the superordinate national category) as a function of the neglect or respect of an important identity (such as the minority identity; Barreto & Ellemers, 2002). The results of this study show that neglecting self-important identities weakens ties with externally imposed identities. In particular, participants whose preferred identity was neglected in favor of an externally ascribed identity expressed low identification and low wish to cooperate with the ascribed identity. Moreover, participants whose preferred identity was neglected showed identity affirmation, by enhancing their identification with the preferred group and displaying behavior in favor of this group.

Importantly, our results also showed that acceptance of an externally imposed identity (e.g., a national identity that encompasses all minority and majority groups) can be promoted by respect for self-important

identities (e.g., minority identities). In fact, in this study participants whose preferred identity was respected, not only showed less identity affirmation, but also reported higher identification with and loyalty to the externally ascribed group. That is, participants were willing to accept and internalize an imposed identity when they experienced respect for their self-preferred identity.

These results have clear implications for the issues we examine in this paper because they suggest that social policies that pressure minority group members to adopt the host identity and relinquish their native identity (and thereby disrespect preexisting ethnic identities) will tend to be ineffective. That is, such assimilative policies have the paradoxical effect of promoting affirmation of the neglected identity and inviting rejection of the imposed identity, thereby fostering separation instead of integration. By contrast, social policies which acknowledge the importance of multiple identities and promote their coexistence (as multiculturalism) actually motivate minority group members to consider alternative bases for self-definition, and facilitate acceptance of and identification with the superordinate category.

ASSIMILATION PRESSURES HAVE NEGATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS

In this section, we examine the impact of categorization threats on the self and thereby consider evidence demonstrating that assimilative pressures are damaging for individual psychological well-being. Given that these pressures are felt by minority group members but not by majority group members, the psychological distress they create, which can undermine performance and social integration, is specifically experienced by minorities. We thus propose that this constitutes another important way in which assimilation pressures promote inequality and social exclusion.

Researchers focusing on the influence of acculturation on individual well-being have dedicated great attention to what is designated as *acculturation stress* or *culture shock* (e.g., Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). For a long time, the dominant idea in this field was that migrants would experience a great deal of stress not only because of the concrete changes that they underwent through the migration process but also because of the fact that many of them would be "living between two cultures" (Watson, 1977). However, empirical research in this domain reveals that it is those migrants who actually do manage to live between two cultures (i.e., those

who endorse biculturalism) that reveal the best mental health on various indexes (e.g., Berry & Kim, 1988; Phinney, 1990). In fact, bicultural individuals are those who hold multiple cultural identities, by striving to maintain their ethnic identity while developing strong ties with the host group. In doing so, these individuals reap both the health benefits of a strong ethnic identity (Gurin & Epps, 1974) and the benefits of functional adaptation to the norms of the host society (see also LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Thus, the endorsement of biculturalism in itself does not seem to lead to psychological distress. However, when bicultural individuals are exposed to assimilative pressures, they may, nevertheless, experience psychological distress. In other words, besides the acculturation strategy endorsed by specific individuals, the acculturation ideology prevalent in a given society will tend to influence the mental health of any migrants living in that society. Specifically, it has been argued that individual mental health would be best in migrants who acculturate in multicultural societies than in migrants who acculturate in societies governed by assimilative ideologies (Berry & Kim, 1988; Murphy, 1965). This would, presumably, be due to the reduced identity discrepancies experienced in multicultural societies, especially given that the majority of migrants appear to endorse acculturation strategies that are consistent with multiculturalism and not with assimilation (e.g., Berry, 1990). However, while existing data at a macrolevel of analysis suggests this may be the case, empirical evidence directly examining the claim that identity discrepancies are damaging to psychological well-being is, so far, very scarce.

In our own research we therefore addressed the possibility that categorization threat may actually constitute at least part of the process through which assimilative pressures yield negative psychological outcomes (Barreto et al., in press). We predicted categorization threats to result in psychological distress because they constitute a form of disrespectful treatment. This is in line with prior research showing that people take the way they are treated by others as a sign of how much they are valued as individuals or as group members (Brockner, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). As a consequence, whether people feel they are treated with respect has an impact on the emotions they express and on their self-esteem (e.g., Krehbiel & Cropanzano, 2000; Tyler et al., 1996; Vermunt, Wit, van den Bos, & Lind, 1996). It thus follows that categorization threats should also have an impact on individual emotional well-being.

To offer an empirical examination of these ideas, we investigated the effect of the type of categorization threat that results from the imposition of unwanted categorizations on individual psychological well-being (Barreto

et al., in press). In doing this, we compared the impact of categorization threat depending on whether the unwanted categorical treatment is imposed in an implicit or an explicit way. We examined this issue because, so far, the examination of identity threats has mainly focused on threats that are quite explicitly imposed (e.g., when people are explicitly allocated to a group with which they do not identify). However, explicit identity threats are not the only – and. arguably. not even the most common – identity threats people are confronted with in modern societies. In fact, most modern societies, and individuals and organizations within these societies, only pay lip service to the importance of diversity and multiculturalism while endorsing discriminatory practices; exerting implicit pressures toward assimilation (e.g., Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995; Devine, Plant, & Blair, 2001; Dovidio, 2001); and defining the norms and values of the host society as inherently superior (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999).

When we think of the characteristics of implicit and explicit categorization threat, it becomes clear that the impact of these two types of threat on the self is likely to be quite different. Generally, explicit identity threats focus one's attention on the source of threat and direct coping efforts toward changing or eliminating the threat. In particular, explicit categorization threats constitute clear, unambiguous treatment that is inconsistent with one's wishes or beliefs. When the source of threat is clear, explicit categorization threats are likely to elicit expressions of hostility toward the source of the treatment and attempts at restoring respectful treatment (such as protest). This, in fact, corresponds to people's usual responses to disrespectful or unfair treatment, as documented in prior research (Krehbiel & Cropanzano, 2000; Tyler et al., 1996; Vermunt et al., 1996). For these reasons, we expected to find this type of response to explicit categorization threat.

By contrast, the source of an implicit identity threat is by definition unclear and so also less easy to recognize. People submitted to an implicit threat of any kind, and so also to an implicit identity threat, are likely to feel uncertain about what is happening to them, and also about the cause of the stress they experience. As a result, those who are exposed to an implicit identity threat are less likely to cope with this threat by expressing negative other-directed emotions (such as hostility) and responses aimed at changing the source of stress (such as protest). Alternatively, they may attribute the threat experienced to causes that are solely internal to themselves and express negative affect that is directed at themselves rather than at the source. For this reason, we expected targets of implicit identity threats to report more emotions that signal negative, self-directed

affects (such as insecurity and low self-esteem) than targets of explicit identity threat.

This is what we found when we examined how people respond to implicit versus explicit categorization threat (Barreto et al., in press; see also Barreto & Ellemers, 2005 for an examination of a similar process as a result of exposure to subtle versus blatant prejudice). Participants in three studies were informed that one team member would allocate a set of tasks among the group members and asked to indicate what their two preferred tasks would be. The various tasks to be performed had been carefully piloted to be equally attractive to our female participants while differing in the degree to which they were stereotypically associated with the female stereotype. In fact, some of the tasks to be performed corresponded to stereotypically male tasks, while others were stereotypically female, and the remaining were stereotypically neutral tasks. Although participants had expressed their own preference, they were only asked to perform female stereotypical tasks. As a consequence, even though gender categorization was inappropriate in the task context, our female participants were all treated on the basis of their gender identity. Participants who were implicitly categorized received no other information regarding the reasons underlying this task allocation, whereas participants who were explicitly categorized were told that they were assigned those particular tasks because of their gender.

Our results across the three studies were consistent with the argument we described in previous sections. Participants who were explicitly categorized expressed more disagreement with the task allocation, more anger, and more wish to protest than participants who were implicitly categorized. That is, participants who were explicitly categorized reported more negative emotions directed at the appropriate target (i.e., the source of disrespectful treatment) and directed their effort at changing the source of stress. By contrast, participants who were implicitly categorized reported greater insecurity and lower personal self-esteem than participants who were explicitly categorized. This is consistent with the idea that targets of implicit identity threats are less able to cope appropriately with the stress to which they are exposed and, therefore, reveal the negative impact of this stress on the self.

Taken together, these results demonstrate the negative psychological impact of categorization threat on its targets. It is important to note that although these results indicate that there are important differences in the way people experience explicit and implicit identity threats, they also clearly demonstrate that categorization threats lead to negative emotional experiences irrespective of the way they are imposed. In fact, people whose

contextual choice of identity was neglected in favor of a categorization that was externally imposed (as is characteristic of assimilative treatment) expressed negative emotions, irrespective of whether the identity threat was implicit or explicit.

If we keep in mind that assimilative pressures imply categorization threat (by neglecting alternative bases of categorization, other than the superordinate category), it is clear that minority group members are more likely to be targets of these types of threat and hence to suffer the negative psychological consequences we described than are majority group members. This is another mechanism through which assimilation ideologies may contribute to inequality between minority group and majority group members and foster social exclusion instead of achieving integration.

ASSIMILATION PRESSURES LEAD TO THE USE OF IDENTITY-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THAT ACCENTUATE DISADVANTAGE

A final reason that assimilation ideologies may result in social exclusion is because they refer to the goal of inclusion in a superordinate category that is defined solely by reference to the values, norms, and traditions of the majority group (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). In this sense, assimilation is a one-way acculturation strategy, which implies that minority group members must adapt to a preexisting national category. That is, the reverse process of changing the definition of the national category because of the inclusion of different subgroups is not contemplated. Since the norms and values of the superordinate category serve as a template against which individuals are judged as worthy, minority group members in assimilationist societies are subjected to more negative expectations and evaluations than majority group members. In this way, the assimilationist ideology intellectually and morally justifies the superiority of the dominant culture (Fredrickson, 1999; Verkuyten, 2005). Indeed, it has been observed that those majority group members who endorse the assimilationist ideology evaluate members of other groups relatively negatively (Verkuyten, 2005).

As a result, the only chance that minority group members have to be positively evaluated in assimilative contexts is to adopt strategies that increase their similarity to the prototype of the superordinate category. That is, to seek inclusion in assimilative societies, minority group members must downplay the characteristics that make them deviate from the prototype of the superordinate category, and endorse characteristics that increase their match to that prototype. Since even small deviations from the prototype can

lead to exclusion (as demonstrated within research on the ingroup overex-
clusion effect, Yzerbyt, Leyens, & Bellour, 1995), to secure social inclusion,
minority group members often need to actually try to *pass as* members of
the majority group. However, we argue that employment of this strategy
is costly in important ways. Passing leads to negative psychological out-
comes, even if the true identity of those who try to pass is left undiscovered.
In turn, these negative psychological outcomes are likely to accentuate the
disadvantage of minority group members, and thereby contribute to their
social exclusion instead of resolving it.

Passing is an identity-management strategy that is often used by minor-
ity group members who wish to counteract the negative stereotypes and
expectations that are commonly associated with their category membership
(Croteau, 1996; Goffman, 1963; Jones et al., 1984; Katz, 1981; Tajfel, 1981).
People may choose to pass because they have internalized an assimilation-
ist ideology according to which they should try to resemble majority group
members as much as possible. Indeed, it has often been found that the more
minority group members internalize the assimilation ideology, the less they
identify with their minority group (Verkuyten, 2005). However, disidenti-
fication with the native category is not a necessary condition or motivation
for the endorsement of this strategy. In fact, people may also choose to pass
simply because they realize that their devalued identity makes them vulner-
able to discrimination, and they expect that passing will reduce this vulner-
ability (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Croteau, 1996; Ostfield & Jehn, 1999
for reviews of motives to pass).

Despite the expectation that passing will constitute a beneficial strategy,
empirical research indicates that this strategy is also associated with impor-
tant costs. Because passing implies both covering the devalued identity and
actively adopting a new identity, it involves both an act of deceit and an act
of positive self-presentation (see also Griffin, 1992). While the act of pos-
itive self-presentation may lead to the benefit of protecting the individual
from negative expectations and stereotypes, the act of deceit is associated
with important costs.

Specifically, people who pass report worse physical health (Cole,
Kemeny, Taylor, & Visscher, 1996; Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser,
1988) and more negative emotions (such as shame and guilt) than people
who choose to reveal a devalued identity (Harris, 2001; Major & Gramzow,
1999; Paxton, 2002). Those who pass also experience apprehension about the
possibility of being exposed as impostors and, as a consequence, carefully
and painstakingly monitor their thoughts and behaviors to avoid reveal-
ing their true identity (Frable, 1993; Smart & Wegner, 1999). This increased

self-monitoring can actually lead to thought intrusion, which is in itself disturbing and also leads to the increased salience of the devalued identity (Smart & Wegner, 1999). Finally, those who pass in the work context report lower work satisfaction, lower productivity, and lower loyalty to the organization. In fact, the costs of hiding are so high that people often prefer to project an authentic but negative view of themselves than to present themselves positively (e.g., Swann, 1990).

Most previous research on the effects of passing follows a correlational methodology, with the consequence that causal relations between variables cannot be clearly established. Recently, researchers have begun to uncover these effects with resort to experimental methods. For instance, the negative cognitive consequences of passing have been thoroughly and experimentally examined by Smart and Wegner (1999). However, the emotional and performance-related consequences of passing have still not been subject to sufficient experimental scrutiny. The causal questions this raises, such as the questions of whether passing has negative emotional consequences or whether those who are emotionally distressed are the ones who most often choose to pass, are quite important.

To address this issue, we conducted a series of studies in which we experimentally examined the effects of passing on emotional well-being. For instance, we approached a sample of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (Barreto, Ellemers, & Tiemersma, 2005) and randomly asked them either to reflect on their experiences with revealing their homosexuality at work or to describe their experiences with passing as heterosexual in the work context. Results of this study confirmed the emotional costs of passing: Those who described an experience with passing reported feeling less positive and more negative affect, as well as more anxiety and depression. Additionally, when passing, people felt less accepted and more isolated than participants who revealed their homosexuality. Finally, passing had negative work-related consequences: Participants who passed reported lower work satisfaction, as well as lower organizational and team commitment than participants who revealed their homosexual identity.

In another set of studies we specifically focused on feelings about the self as a consequence of passing (Barreto, Ellemers, & Banal, 2006). Based on past research showing that the operation of self-fulfilling prophecies leads members of devalued groups to report low self-confidence (e.g., Biernat, Crandall, Young, Kobrynowicz, & Halpin, 1998; Cadinu, Maass, Frigerio, Impagliazzo, & Latinotti, 2003; Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998), we explored the possibility that, when an individual passes as a member of a positively evaluated group, similar self-fulfilling prophecies might result in an increase

in self-confidence (cf., Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). Our expectation in these studies was that passing as a member of a more-valued group would not lead to this benefit for self-confidence. The basic argument was that although passing can present the self more positively to others, it presents the self less positively "to oneself" because of the act of deceit it implies (Goffman, 1963; Leary, 1999). As a consequence, passing was expected to be accompanied by negative self-directed affect, such as guilt and shame (Harris, 2001; Major & Gramzow, 1999; Paxton, 2002), which should undermine the self-confidence of those who passed.

This is, in fact, what we found in a series of two studies. In line with our manipulations, participants who were induced to pass indeed thought that passing would improve the expectations their partner had of them. Nevertheless, participants who passed reported lower (performance-related) self-confidence than participants who revealed the devalued identity. In addition, participants who passed reported feeling more guilt and shame than participants who revealed, and these emotions actually mediated the effect of passing on self-confidence. Furthermore, no performance benefits of passing could be observed; task performance turned out to be associated with self-confidence – not with partner's expectations.

Taken together, these findings indicate that members of devalued groups find themselves in a no-win situation. If they reveal the devalued identity they are vulnerable to negative stereotypes and social exclusion. However, if they try to pass as members of a more-valued group (such as the majority group) they suffer psychological costs, such as negative self-directed affect (e.g., guilt and shame), and loss of self-confidence. This is likely to have important, negative implications for individual work and social performance, which promote social inequality and perpetuate the disadvantages of minority group members.

DOES ASSIMILATION FOSTER SOCIAL INCLUSION?

In this chapter we reviewed evidence to show that attempts to enhance social inclusion by advocating assimilation are likely to achieve the opposite effect. That is, because they imply various types of identity threat, assimilation pressures induce intergroup conflict and undermine social cohesion. Furthermore, we have argued that minority group members tend to suffer important psychological costs as a result of assimilation pressures, which drive them to engage in strategies that increase rather than alleviate these psychological costs. Thus, the paradox of social inclusion is that measures which seemingly ensure individualized, meritocratic treatment

result in systematic inequality and disadvantage for members of minority groups. Indeed, assimilative pressures may often be well-intended to reduce group-based differences and ensure the meritocratic treatment of newcomers and of other minorities. However, as we demonstrated in this chapter, such pressures are inappropriate tools with which to reach the goal of social equality.

As an alternative to assimilation, we have proposed that multiculturalism – the recognition of multiple identities – is a more fruitful strategy for achieving true integration and the social inclusion of minority group members. In reviewing the empirical evidence relevant to this issue, we have come to the conclusion that for minority group members in particular, the endorsement of a dual identity (i.e., as a minority group member and as a member of the more inclusive national category) may be seen as perfectly compatible. Indeed, when this dual identity is acknowledged by others, it can actually help alleviate stress instead of contributing to it, as it is often thought to do. The achievement of social inclusion thus requires a consideration of differences between groups within society that must be respected and embraced. This does not necessarily imply that minority group members will prefer to be treated on the basis of their minority identity but that their preference – whether to define themselves in terms of this identity – must be respected by others.

In a society that is characterized by assimilationist beliefs, minority group members are put at a disadvantage. Importantly, this is not only the case for minority group members who do not wish to relinquish their native identity. That is, even those who go along with the view that the majority identity is superior and try to pass as majority group members suffer psychological costs due to their passing attempts, which make it less likely that they are successful. Again, this indicates that societal norms and beliefs that (implicitly) present the majority identity as superior or normative, actually enhance the disadvantage and exclusion encountered by minority group members, even when they give in to assimilation pressures or try to pass as majority group members. Additionally, those who aim for assimilation not only may face rejection by the majority group despite their attempts to assimilate (cf. LaFramboise et al., 1993), but they also run the risk of being rejected by other ingroup members because they have relinquished ingroup norms and values (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002). Ultimately, they may come up empty-handed when they are not fully accepted by the majority and then discover that they cannot turn back to the minority group for support. Again, this illustrates the costs associated with pressures toward assimilation for minority group members, in particular.

In considering our proposition, some may counterargue that many events currently hitting the news media dispute the effectiveness of multiculturalism in ensuring social cohesion. Indeed, ethnic tensions in societies that are commonly seen as true models of multiculturalism, such as the Netherlands, may be seen as demonstrating that multiculturalism has failed. However, in our opinion, the problem is not that multiculturalism has failed but that ideologies and practices that are de facto promoting assimilation are so often ill-defined as multiculturalism. That is, very often the success of multiculturalism is gauged by the extent to which migrants are seen to have relinquished their native culture in the (mistaken) belief that only by doing so can they truly adopt the values and norms that characterize the host society. First, this assessment demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of what multiculturalism and integration are all about. Indeed, it must be noted that the assumption that native and host norms and values are incompatible is one that underlies assimilationist ideologies, not multiculturalism. Second, as we demonstrated in this chapter, it is important to stress that the endorsement of the norms and values of the host society is not endangered by the maintenance of native values. In fact, quite the contrary situation occurs: Experiencing respect for native values actually promotes the endorsement of the norms and values of the host society (see also Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006). Thus, what is often seen as the failure of multiculturalism is no more than a clear demonstration of the negative effects of assimilationist pressures.

Although in our present reasoning we mainly focused on ethnic minorities and problems of social integration, in principle, similar processes apply to other cases in which members of different groups interact with each other in a context that is characterized by multiple identities. A case in point is that of professional women in organizations, who may prefer to simultaneously define themselves in terms of their gender identity *and* in terms of their professional identity. Due to the different mechanisms we have examined in this chapter, when these women are treated by others in terms of one of these identities only (i.e., only as women or only as professionals) they will suffer psychological disadvantage that is likely to undermine work commitment and work performance. By contrast, when the dual identities they represent and the multiple roles they fulfill are acknowledged by others, these women tend to be happier and to function better both at work and at home (Ellemers & Rink, 2005; Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2007).

In this chapter, we argued that the achievement of social inclusion requires a bilateral process through which minority group members, on the one hand, endorse and follow the norms and values of the host society but,

on the other hand, are treated as full members of society who are respected for their distinct identity. Consistent with pluralist ideologies, this implies that *mutual respect* for the similarities and differences that characterize various groups in society provides a solid basis for social equality and integration (Glazer, 1997; Huo & Molina, 2006).

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