The social functions of in-group bias
Scheepers, D.T.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Chapter 1

General Introduction

This thesis provides a motivational analysis of in-group bias: The tendency to over-evaluate or favor one’s own group (the in-group) and/or to under-evaluate or derogate a group to which one does not belong (the out-group). In-group bias is a robust phenomenon demonstrated in both laboratory and field settings (see Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001; Brewer, 1979; Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992; Tajfel, 1982 for overviews). Moreover, it will not be difficult for the reader to think of multiple examples of in-group bias in day-to-day life (e.g., underpayment of certain groups within society or out-group derogating songs sung by soccer fans), indicating that in-group bias is a widespread phenomenon. Although there is broad agreement that in-group bias stems from motivational as well as cognitive processes, there is still a lack of clarity about what exactly drives people to favor their in-group and/or to derogate the out-group. The aim with this thesis is to contribute new pieces to the motivational puzzle of in-group bias.

When exploring the motivational basis of a psychological phenomenon one asks questions like: “What does it set in motion?”, “how does it benefit you?”, “what drives it?” “what motives are satisfied?” and “what functions are being served?” This makes it clear not only that in-group bias is a broad phenomenon, but also that the motivational question is quite a broad one to answer. Two aspects are central to the present analysis: First, this analysis is concerned with the functions of in-group bias. This means that it is not about the isolation of some ultimate intra-psychological drive, but rather about goals that are or are not served by means of in-group bias. Second, the current analysis is about the social functions of in-group bias. This means that it adopts a group-level focus directed at establishing what in-group bias can do for the group, rather than what it can do for the individual. Later in this introduction, the specific motivational model that is proposed here will be further elaborated.

1 A quite broad definition of in-group bias is used here. In these terms it has in-group favoring and well as out-group derogating aspect, and cognitive as well as behavioral aspects (see e.g., Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002, for a similar conceptualization).
Central to the framework that we propose is a distinction between two social functions of in-group bias: an identity function and an instrumental function. The identity function refers to the ways in which in-group bias may help to create and express a particular social identity. The instrumental function is defined as the facilitating role that in-group bias can have during a process of social change. The purpose of this thesis is not just to disentangle these two functions, but also to define the circumstances under which they operate.

Below I provide a more precise conceptualization of the two functions of in-group bias, as well as the more general motivational model that is proposed. Then a sketch of the materials of this model will be presented, in terms of the contextual and psychological determinants of the two functions of in-group bias. In order to frame the distinction between the two functions, in the following section I first provide an overview of the existing literature on in-group bias. As we will see, the distinction between two functions of in-group bias can be related to a more general distinction between two approaches within this literature.

**Approaches to In-group Bias**

The history of the scientific study of phenomena like in-group bias, discrimination, and prejudice can be characterized in terms of a shift along two dimensions: a dysfunctional/functional dimension and an individualistic/group-level dimension. Early research on this topic described in-group bias as dysfunctional behavior committed by, for example, frustrated individuals. Examples are the authoritarian personality approach (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) and the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). In the 1960s, these approaches were challenged by ones that came to recognize in-group bias as a more functional “group” phenomenon (see Coser, 1956 for an excellent discussion of the shift in focus along the dysfunctional/functional dimension). The two most important representatives of this shift to the collective end of the dimension are realistic conflict theory (LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif & Sherif, 1969) and the social identity approach (comprising social identity theory, Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986, and self-categorization theory, Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Because the present research is concerned with the group-level dimension of in-group bias, these theories will be described in more detail below, starting with realistic conflict theory.

**Realistic Conflict Theory**

Realistic conflict theory (RCT) has become well-known for the “Robber’s Cave” experiment conducted by the Sherifs (Sherif & Sherif, 1969), although the crucial principles had already been noted by Coser (1956) and more thorough theoretical statements are provided by LeVine and Campbell (1972). Its basic hypothesis is straightforward: In-group bias and
discrimination stem from realistic conflicts between groups over scarce material resources. More specifically, RCT predicts antagonism between in-group and out-group when the two are negatively interdependent for their material outcomes (i.e., as one group wins, the other loses). Moreover, RCT predicts cooperation between groups when they are positively interdependent (i.e., collective efforts of in-group and out-group are needed) for obtaining certain resources.

These principles were strikingly demonstrated in the Robber’s Cave experiment by Muzafar Sherif and his collaborators (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1954; as cited in Sherif & Sherif, 1969). The setting of this experiment was a summer camp for “normal” schoolboys from a large city in the US. Sherif and his co-workers wanted to investigate the circumstances under which these normal individuals would engage in aggressive inter-group competition. In order to do so, two groups were created: the “Rattlers” and the “Eagles.” After a first stage of the experiment in which intra-group structures were developed, an inter-group competition was introduced. The two groups competed in a tournament in which several prizes could be won. As a result of this negative interdependence in relation to these attractive resources, inter-group conflict arose. This conflict went far beyond the official games and even led to breaking into the other group’s cabin, and stealing and destroying the other group’s property. In a later stage in the experiment, group goals were implemented for which there was a positive interdependence between the groups (e.g., combining money collected from both groups in order to rent a movie). As a result, the hostility between the groups dissipated, which also gave an ethically satisfying end to the experiment.

Since the Robber’s Cave experiment other research has also demonstrated the relation between conflicting group goals and in-group bias (see Jackson, 1993 for an overview). More recently, Esses, Jackson, and Armstrong (1998) have extended the RCT hypothesis from social groups, like in the Sherif study, to social categories. Specifically, they showed that an important predictor of negative attitudes towards immigrants in Canada was the extent to which they were perceived to form a threat to material resources such as jobs.

As with every theory, RCT has its strengths and weaknesses. These will not be exhaustively described here, but those relevant for the current analysis will be briefly mentioned. An important credit for the developers of RCT is that they were the first to study inter-group conflict as a group phenomenon. However, this recognition of these “social” aspects of inter-group conflict also forms a limitation in a social psychological sense. That is, the theory focuses more on the circumstances that trigger inter-group conflict and cooperation than on the specific psychological processes that are involved. Indeed, a substantial part of RCT’s premises, as formulated by LeVine and Campbell (1972), are more or less anthropological or sociological in character (e.g., “the weakest group in a local cluster should be the most ethnocentric” and “those groups most isolated from their out-groups will be least ethnocentric”). Related to this,
and especially important for the current analysis is that the theory is somewhat ambiguous about
the relation between conflicting group goals and the functions of in-group bias. That is, for RCT
in-group bias is more a reflection of inter-group competition than something that is functional
(e.g., in instrumental terms) during such competition.

Another well-known criticism leveled at RCT is the question of whether real conflict is
necessary for in-group bias to occur (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is difficult to discern from
the Robber's Cave experiment because no control conditions (without realistic conflict between
the groups) were included. However, it should be noted that in this experiment there was some
suggestion that although realistic conflict may have strengthened the conflict, there was already
conflict before the competition was introduced. That is, during the group-forming stage of the
experiment inter-group hostilities, such as name-calling, were observed. The question of whether
realistic conflict is needed for inter-group hostility was more systematically addressed in
research from another important approach towards inter-group relations: the social identity
approach.

The Social Identity Approach

The social identity perspective on inter-group relations consists of a complex set of
theoretical statements. In order to do justice to its rich and broad explanatory power, it is
necessary to make distinctions between different theories, different parts of these theories, and
more recent developments and elaborations. After introducing the general rationale behind the
approach, its basic theory, social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) will be
described, followed by elaborations in terms of self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner et al.,
1987) and the social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE; Reicher, Spears, &
Postmes, 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994).

The central tenet of all theory within the social identity approach is that people derive part
of their identity from the groups to which they belong (their social identity). In other words, a
distinction is made between an individual and a social part of the self-concept. It is important to
stress that social identity is not a secondary or less valid form of self, but rather the result of
higher-level self-definition in terms of group membership. The first step in developing a sense
of social identity is the categorization process by which the social world is classified in terms of
in-group and out-group. However, this cognitive aspect of social identity is only the beginning.
By means of social comparison between in-group and out-group social categories derive their
meaning and value (Tajfel, 1978). The process of defining the social self by means of inter-

---

2 This distinction between a personal and a social identity is made explicit within self-categorization theory
(Turner, 1987) although the roots can be found within social identity theory (e.g., the distinction in terms of the
inter-personal/inter-group continuum; Tajfel, 1978).
group comparison is similar to defining the personal self-concept by means of inter-personal comparison.

With regard to the motivational processes driving self-definition, parallels can be drawn between social identity and personal identity (e.g., Swann, 1987). These motivations can generally be divided into a valence principle (i.e., people strive for a positive identity) and a meaning or distinctiveness principle (people strive for a distinctive and meaningful identity). In terms of social identity, self-definition serves the need for a positive and meaningful social identity (Tajfel, 1978). In other words, people want to know what their group is about, what it is not about, and what makes their group positively distinct from other groups (Mummendey & Schreiber, 1984). How these principles are served by in-group bias is one of the major themes of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Social identity theory. Social identity theory stems from a research program using the so-called minimal group paradigm (MGP). This paradigm, as well as the results obtained with it, will be described in some detail here, not only because it formed the basis of SIT, but also because it has important implications for the identity-function of in-group bias that we propose later. However, at this point it is also important to note that social identity theory is not solely about the MGP but also provides an extensive analysis of the interplay of psychological processes and socio-structural determinants. Because the context-dependence of the different motivations for in-group bias is one of the major themes in this analysis, the socio-structural part of SIT also has relevance and will be described after a summary of the MGP.

A study by Rabbie and Horwitz (1969) gave the initial impetus to the development of what later became known as “the minimal group paradigm.” Rabbie and Horwitz showed in-group favoritism in groups that were formed on the basis of a flip of a coin; that is without a history of conflict, and without well-formed group structure. In other words, even on the basis of a meaningless social categorization, people tended to favor their in-group. In the wake of this influential experiment, the MGP was further developed by Henri Tajfel and his co-workers (Tajfel, Flament, Billig & Bundy, 1971). Important features of the paradigm are that there is no contact within or between the groups, that people act on the basis of anonymity, and that there is no utilitarian basis for group membership or the participant’s responses (e.g., in-group favoritism).

Various criteria have been used as the basis for minimal categorization, such as preference for a certain painter (Tajfel et al., 1971), a flip of a coin (Billig & Tajfel, 1973), or performance on a cognitive task (e.g., “underestimators” and “overestimators” on a dot estimation task; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1998, or “inductive” versus “deductive” reasoners; Doosje, Spears, & Koomen, 1995). After categorization in minimal groups, participants usually divide money (e.g., Tajfel et al., 1971) or points (e.g., Turner, 1975) between
other (anonymous) members of the in-group and the out-group, or rate them on certain traits (e.g., Jetten et al., 1998). In-group bias was consistently shown in these studies (see Brewer, 1979; Diehl, 1990; Tajfel, 1978, 1982 for overviews). That is, participants allocated more money to members of the in-group than to members of the out-group and also gave more favorable judgments of the in-group than of the out-group. These results were obtained without objective conflict between the groups, and without participants being able to make any personal gain by displaying in-group favoritism.

In order to discern the different strategies participants used when allocating money or points, Tajfel and collaborators developed the so-called “Tajfel-matrices” (Tajfel et al., 1971; see also Bourhis, Sachdev, & Gagnon, 1994, and Chapter 3 for further details). Two strategies that evidence in-group bias are the “maximum in-group profit” strategy (awarding the maximum amount of resources to the in-group, regardless of how much is awarded to the out-group) and the “maximum differentiation” strategy (maximizing the difference, in favor of the in-group, between in-group and out-group even at the cost of absolute in-group profit). Interestingly, the maximum differentiation strategy appeared to be stronger than the maximization of in-group profit. In other words, participants were willing to sacrifice some of their own group’s profit if this would result in a greater differentiation between in-group and out-group (Brewer, 1979; Brewer & Silver, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1971). As we will see below, this finding is of particular interest in terms of the motivations for in-group bias within the minimal group paradigm.

Social identity theory provides an explanation for in-group bias within the MGP in terms of providing positive social meaning to the otherwise meaningless minimal categorization. That is, in the absence of more meaningful information about what their group is about, and what makes it positively distinct from the out-group, participants used the in-group bias measures to acquire a sense of positive group distinctiveness. Turner (1975) has called this a “social competition” between the two groups for a positive social identity. The motivational underpinnings of the social identity account of in-group bias is a combination of the meaning and the valence principles introduced above. What will follow is an overview of the evidence for these two principles as motivators for in-group bias within the MGP.

The “search for meaning” as a driving force behind in-group bias was already noted by Tajfel in his important 1969 paper, but he made it even more explicit in an edited book published in 1978: “. . . the reason for this cognitive, behavioral and evaluative inter-group differentiation is in the need that the individuals have to provide social meaning through social identity to the inter-group situation, experimental or any other . . .” (p. 86; italics added). Although more direct empirical tests of this meaning-motive have been scarce (see Spears, Jetten, Arend, Van
Norren, & Postmes, 2001, for an exception) there is some more indirect evidence for this principle in terms of the preservation of group distinctiveness, and the reduction of uncertainty.

To start with the former, the importance of group distinctiveness (which is an important aspect of meaning; Vignoles, Chryssochou, & Breakwell, 2000) was already illustrated in the earliest MGP studies in which it was found that maximum differentiation was a more prominent allocation strategy than was maximum in-group profit. This motivation to optimize the difference with the out-group can be interpreted as an attempt to stress the uniqueness of one’s group. More direct evidence for the importance of group distinctiveness comes from a research program by Jetten (1997; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996, 1998). In this research it was consistently shown that when groups became more similar (in terms of preferences, beliefs, or norms) people reacted by exhibiting in-group bias in order to restore positive group-distinctiveness (and thereby a meaningful group identity).

A second line of research that can be related to the meaning principle underlying social categorization is the uncertainty reduction approach (Grieve & Hogg, 1999; Mullin & Hogg, 1998; see also Hogg, 2000, for an overview). According to this view, in-group bias in the MGP (and social categorization effects more in general) can be interpreted as attempts to reduce subjective uncertainty. In-group bias can be a way of reducing uncertainty because it provides the person with a sense of validity of the inter-group categorization. Indeed, Grieve and Hogg have shown that in-group bias in the MGP was reduced when certainty was raised because, for example, participants were given the opportunity to do some practicing with the Tajfel-matrices. Thus, like the motivation to preserve group distinctiveness, the motivation to reduce subjective uncertainty is another important indicator of the search for meaning in social categorization.

The other motivational aspect of self-definition through in-group bias (positive valence) has primarily been elaborated in terms of the enhancement of self-esteem (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988). For example, Oakes and Turner (1980) and Lemyre and Smith (1985) showed that in-group bias in the MGP was reflected in higher levels of self-esteem. This fits with the social identity rationale: The accomplishment of positive group-distinctiveness results in a more positively-valued social identity. Despite these two promising studies, later ones showed rather mixed results, which led to what by then was known as “the self-esteem hypothesis” acquiring a controversial status (SEH; Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Long & Spears, 1997; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998).

Besides the SEH, other evidence for the valence principle comes from research on the so-called positive-negative asymmetry (Mummendey et al., 1992; see Mummendey & Otten, 1998 for an overview). This refers to the well-replicated finding that people show a stronger in-group bias along positive dimensions than along negative dimensions. In other words, when positive rewards (e.g., money or points) are to be allocated, people are more willing to favor their
in-group than they are willing to derogate the out-group when negative resources (e.g., unpleasant noises) are to be allocated. Although there are multiple explanations offered for this asymmetry (Mummendey & Otten, 1998), Reynolds, Turner, and Haslam (2000) have argued that in-group bias is stronger along positive dimensions because what matters is what defines the in-group as a positive-distinctive entity. In other words, derogating the out-group conflicts with a positive social identity.

In sum, in-group bias within the MGP is a well-replicated phenomenon, and can be explained by social identity theory as a process by which one establishes a positive and meaningful social identity. For the “value” part of this motivation there is some (albeit rather mixed) evidence that in-group bias in the MGP can be linked to self-esteem, and occurs especially along dimensions that help to define the group in positive terms. For the meaning part there is some indirect evidence in terms of the motivation to restore group distinctiveness as well as the motivation to reduce uncertainty. However, more direct evidence for a meaning-principle driving in-group bias is scarce.

Despite the direct and indirect evidence for an explanation of in-group bias within the MGP in terms of social identity theory, neither the paradigm nor the theory have been without their critics. For example, although Rabbie (1993; Rabbie & Schot, 1990; Rabbie, Schot, & Visser, 1989) does not question the results obtained with the MGP, he argues that they are better explained in terms of instrumental motives than in terms of the accomplishment of a positive social identity. According to his “behavioral interaction model” (BIM), which is based on principles derived from interdependence theory, the favorable treatment of in-group members within the MGP can be understood as rational self-interest. The main motive is to gain as much money as possible and although participants cannot allocate money directly to themselves, they still can act on the basis of a reciprocity principle. That is, following a “normative in-group scheme” people expect that other group members will favor them, which leads them in turn to favor other in-group members.

Some evidence for this position came from a study in which the outcome dependence on either in-group members and/or out-group members was explicitly manipulated (Rabbie et al., 1989). It was found here that participants adjusted their allocation behavior as a function of whether they were dependent on members of the in-group, the out-group, or both for the money that they would receive at the end of the experiment. Specifically, participants who were dependent for their outcomes on other members of the in-group favored the in-group, whereas participants who were dependent on the out-group favored the out-group. However, in the condition where participants were dependent on both in-group and out-group they still favored the in-group. This is somewhat against what would be predicted from a strong interdependence stance because when participants are dependent on all others they should not differentiate
between them on the basis of group membership (instead they should use a *fairness* or a *maximum joint profit* allocation strategy). Moreover, although “rational self-interest” may explain some of the favored treatment of in-group members when material resources are at stake, it is more difficult to explain in-group bias in the allocation of points or in trait ratings purely in terms of interdependence.

The Rabbie et al. (1989) experiment initiated a long debate between the “social identity” and the “interdependence” camps about what ultimately motivates behavior in the MGP (Bourhis, Turner, & Gagnon, 1997; Gagnon & Bourhis, 1996; Gaertner & Insko, 2000; Rabbie, 1993; Rabbie & Schot, 1990). We will not go into this here. Instead, an attempt to integrate these two perspectives will be presented in Chapter 2. What is important at this point is that the work by Rabbie clearly shows that in-group bias is by no means an inevitable, or even automatic, response to categorization into minimal groups. Rather, people act strategically and also take instrumental concerns into account. However, social identity theory seems necessary for at least some results obtained within the MGP, including results that are often regarded as most important.

Although social identity theory grew out of the MGP, the theory also goes beyond this paradigm (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Another important part of the theory addresses the interplay between socio-structural determinants and psychological processes such as group identification and in-group bias. This part of SIT was initiated by the question of how people cope with a negative social identity that results from membership in a group that occupies a relatively low position within the status hierarchy. Social identity theory describes three reactions: Individual mobility (moving to another more favorable group), social creativity (e.g., stressing other dimensions on which inter-group comparisons turn out more positively), and competition against the out-group. This latter option can take the form of collective action against the out-group in an attempt to change the positions groups take in the status hierarchy. Competition against the out-group can take more or less “realistic” forms (e.g., as in the Robber’s Cave experiment) or can take the form of “social competition” (e.g., as in the MGP).

In order to predict which of these three options is chosen at any given point, social identity theory describes three socio-structural determinants: the permeability of group boundaries, the legitimacy of status differences, and the stability of status differences. For example, social mobility is predicted to be the more viable option when group boundaries are permeable, whereas collective action becomes a more viable option when group boundaries are impermeable. Moreover, social competition is most likely to arise when the status differences are seen as unstable and illegitimate (Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner & Brown, 1978).
Chapter 1

Evidence for this part of social identity theory has come from a research program by Ellemers and collaborators (Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers et al., 1993; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990). For example, it was shown that members of low status groups showed increased group identification when their group's position was seen as unstable (Ellemers et al., 1990), and especially then when status differences were seen as illegitimate and impermeable (Ellemers et al., 1993). This strengthened identification was, in line with SIT, interpreted as a preparation for collective action. Research by Turner and Brown (1978) showed a similar pattern with regard to in-group bias: When status was seen as legitimate, high status groups scored higher on in-group bias than low status groups, but when the status differences were seen as both illegitimate and unstable, low status groups showed in-group bias to an equal extent as high status groups did (see also Bettencourt et al., 2001 for meta-analytic evidence for these relationships).

In sum, there is also strong evidence for the socio-structural aspect of SIT. In the next section I will briefly describe two more recent elaborations of SIT in terms of the cognitive and strategic aspects of inter-group behavior: self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) and the social identity model of deindividuation effects (Reicher et al., 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994).

Self-categorization theory. The self-categorization theory of Turner and collaborators (Turner et al., 1987) may seem to be of little relevance in the present context because it is often seen as the more cognitive part of the social identity framework (with SIT as the more motivational theory). However, the theory is relevant for the current motivational analysis of in-group bias for at least two reasons. First, it provides a more detailed description than SIT does of the circumstances that determine whether people act in terms of their personal or social identity. Secondly, "the search for meaning" as a motivation underlying self-categorization is theoretically and empirically further developed within SCT than in SIT.

Like SIT, a starting point for SCT is the distinction between a personal self-concept (the aspects of identity that make a person "unique") and a group self-concept (based on group membership). Which level of self is activated at a given time is determined by two factors: the accessibility of a given self-category (e.g., as a result of the frequency by which it has been activated before) and the fit between the category and the input stimulus. In combination, accessibility and fit not only determine which level of self is activated but also the content of that particular category (e.g., a particular social identity).

Self-categorization theory is a general cognitive theory of the self-concept and has been applied to a number of phenomena, including stereotyping, group cohesion and social influence (see Turner, 1999 for an overview). With regard to in-group bias SCT is important because a prerequisite of inter-group behavior is that one first views oneself and others in terms of in-group and out-group (i.e., social identity is salient). At first sight this may appear to go against
the social identity account of in-group bias because, as described above, SIT explains in-group bias as a way of creating inter-group differences, whereas SCT explains in-group bias as a reflection of perceived inter-group differences (Spears, Jetten, & Scheepers, 2002). However, as Jetten, Spears, and Manstead (1996; 1998; 1999) have shown, a combination of principles derived from SIT and SCT may predict when in-group bias will be highest. That is, for in-group bias to arise the groups must be to some extent distinguishable (as a result of category accessibility and fit) but at the same time be “too close for comfort” (inducing the previously mentioned need to increase distinctiveness; Jetten et al., 1999).

It should be noted that although in-group bias may constitute a reflection of inter-group differences in SCT terms, the fit principle can also function as a motivator to accentuate these a priori differences. More specifically, there is evidence that when there are two distinguishable groups but it is somewhat vague how the groups meaningfully differ, the fit principle can further stimulate inter-group differentiation (Haslam, McGarty and Brown, 1996; McGarty, Haslam, Turner, & Oakes, 1993). Thus SCT not only provides an analysis of the circumstances under which people perceive and act on the basis of group membership; it also provides a more direct account of the search for positive and meaningful group-distinctiveness as an important motivator underlying inter-group differentiation, as proposed in the early work of Tajfel (1969; 1978). In the next section another more recent development within the social identity framework will be described, namely the SIDE model (Reicher et al., 1995). Among other things, this model provides more insight in the strategic aspects of group action.

The SIDE model. The SIDE-model provides a social identity account of the deindividuation phenomenon (i.e., the “total absorption” of the individual by the group). An important reason for developing this model was lack of satisfaction with more classic accounts of deindividuation in terms of a “loss of self” leading to “anti-normative” behavior. Following SCT principles, SIDE theorists have argued that deindividuation does not constitute a loss of self but rather a shift in the level of self-definition from individual self to the social self (i.e., a process of depersonalization rather than “deindividuation”; Reicher et al., 1995). Moreover, according to SIDE, deindividuation does not necessarily lead to anti-normative behavior but rather elicits behavior that is in line with the group norms associated with the salient social category. Indeed, this means that although “deindividuated” football hooligans may become more aggressive, “deindividuated” social workers may become more helpful to others.

SIDE distinguishes two dimensions along which the effects of deindividuation occur: a cognitive dimension and a strategic dimension. Regarding the cognitive dimension, SIDE states that anonymity within a group will lead to more deindividuation because under these conditions inter-personal differences are less salient. That is, anonymity enhances the inter-changeability of group members, whereas when group members are identifiable as individuals, personal
differences become more salient. Moreover, according to SIDE this will not lead to generally anti-normative behavior, but instead to behavior that is consistent with group norms. Indeed there is evidence that deindividuation leads to behavior in line with salient group norms (Postmes & Spears, 1998).

The strategic dimension of SIDE concerns the way in which group behavior is adapted in response to being identifiable to members of the in-group or the out-group. Specifically, SIDE predicts more pro in-group behavior when the persons’ responses are identifiable to other in-group members (Reicher, Levine, & Gordijn, 1998; see also Barreto & Ellemers, 2000; Ellemers, Van Dyck, Hinkle, & Jacobs, 2000). Moreover, being identifiable to members of the out-group will have quite different effects depending on whether the out-group can punish the in-group for its behavior. For example, Reicher and Levine (1994) found that when the out-group had the power to punish the in-group, group members displayed less pro in-group behavior. However, when the out-group did not have the power to punish the in-group, more pro in-group behavior was expressed in front of an out-group audience than in front of an in-group audience. In Chapters 3 and 4 these principles will be used to predict the influence of audience on (the functions of) in-group bias.

In this current section I have described two approaches to inter-group relations: the realistic conflict approach and the social identity approach. These two perspectives form the base of the distinction between two functions of in-group bias that are central in this thesis. However, before turning to a more precise description of these functions it seems sensible to first evaluate the unique and shared aspects of SIT and RCT.

**RCT versus the social identity approach.** RCT and SIT have often been contrasted with each other on the basis that the latter is the more parsimonious theory because of its basic proposition that no real conflict is necessary for in-group bias to arise. It should be noted however that the founders of the social identity approach saw the two approaches more as complementary than as exclusive (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In fact, they never ignored the importance of realistic competition and they regarded social competition as an additional form of competition. Furthermore, as noted above, both theories share a group-level focus, and both theories stress the context-dependence of group phenomena such as in-group bias.

Although the theories have their shared and unique aspects, integrative attempts have been scarce, at least at the empirical level. Research has often been concerned to test the two theories against each other, or to test predictions from the theories in a parallel way (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998; Kelly, 1988). However, material group goals (e.g., a more equal division of certain resources) can also define the content of one’s social identity (e.g., feminist). In turn, group identification can also be a predictor of one’s willingness to work to accomplish these goals (Doosje, Spears, & Ellemers, 2002; Ellemers et al., 1993; Ouwerkerk, de Gilder, & de
Vries, 2000). Thus in addition to parallel effects, principles derived from RCT and SIT may also interact to predict inter-group behavior.

The ways in which identity processes and goal (inter-)dependence interact to influence inter-group differentiation was nicely illustrated in a field study on the effects of the merger of the “social” faculties (e.g., sociology, psychology, etc.) into one faculty (“the faculty of social and behavioral sciences”) at the University of Amsterdam. Faculty members (excluding psychologists, who formed the out-group in the current study) filled in a questionnaire in which their identification with their prior faculty was measured. After this, they were asked to think about cooperative group goals within the new faculty (e.g., conducting multi-disciplinary research), or were asked to think about conflicting group goals within the new faculty (e.g., attaining more space for the prior faculty in the new faculty building). After this, they completed an inter-group differentiation scale. Specifically, they indicated the extent to which they thought members of their own prior faculty (e.g., sociologists) and members of the out-group (psychologists) would agree with a set of statements about “proper science” that was thought to be stereotypical for psychologists (e.g., about the superiority of lab experiments over field research). By subtracting the scores for the in-group from the scores for the out-group an inter-group differentiation scale was created: Higher scores reflect a tendency to stress the differences between the former faculties, while lower scores reflect less inter-group differentiation.

The scores on identification with the prior faculty were divided into low and high by means of a median split. This factor, as well as condition (cooperative versus competitive) were included in an analysis of variance on the differentiation scale. The two-way interaction, which proved to be significant, is displayed in Figure 1.1. As can be seen here, those who were (a) highly identified with their prior faculty and (b) led to think about competitive group goals showed higher levels of inter-group differentiation than did those who (a) identified weakly and (b) thought about competitive group goals. However, those who were highly identified and thought of cooperative goals differentiated significantly less than did those who identified weakly and thought about cooperative goals.

Several aspects of this study are important. First, it stresses the interplay of realistic conflict and social identity processes in the explanation of inter-group differentiation. Because there were no main effects in this study, an investigation that had focused on just one factor or the other would have failed to show any effects. Secondly, this study puts into perspective strong formulations of RCT or SIT such as “competitive group goals will always lead to more differentiation”, or “high group identification will always lead to more differentiation” (see Turner, 1999 for a critical discussion of this, frequently made, oversimplification of SIT).

---

3 This study was conducted in collaboration with Rosette van Leeuwaarde, Aad Lehmann, Irene de Pater and Jaap Steffen.
In sum, RCT and SIT have often been contrasted against each other, although this was not done by the “founding fathers” of the social identity approach. Moreover, although RCT and SIT have unique as well as shared features, integration of the two theories will not only lead to more theoretical progress, but will also be the only way to do justice to the highly complex nature of in-group bias. Furthering the integration between the two theories will be one of the (cooperative) goals underlying this thesis.

The theories described above (RCT, BIM, SIT, SCT, and SIDE) form the basis of the distinction between the identity and instrumental functions of in-group bias, which in turn forms the basis of the current thesis. Moreover, insights from the socio-structural and strategic components of SIT and SIDE will be used to define the circumstances under which these two functions operate. In the next section the two functions of in-group bias will be defined, and the hypotheses that are tested in this thesis will be described.

A Functional Analysis of In-group Bias

On the basis of the above overview of the literature, a distinction can be drawn between two approaches towards in-group bias. The first, which can be called the “instrumental approach”, describes the way in which in-group bias can lead to the fulfillment of (material)
goals. Examples are RCT, which has focused on the fulfillment of group goals, the BIM which has also focused on more individual goals, and the socio-structural part of SIT in terms of the collective action option for group-status enhancement. The second approach can be called the “identity approach”, which is represented by theories like SIT (in particular the minimal group part), SCT, and SIDE. A critical aspect of these theories is the focus on how in-group bias can help to create and claim a positive and meaningful social identity. The two approaches are not seen as incompatible with each other but rather as focusing on different facets of in-group bias. The distinction between an instrumental approach and an identity approach to in-group bias forms the starting-point of the current functional analysis.

In the next section the current motivational model will be defined in more general terms. I will clarify what is meant by the terms “motive”, “goal”, and “function”, and what the proposed relations between these concepts are. After that, the identity and instrumental functions of in-group bias are described in more detail, followed by a description of the “independent variable” side of the model in terms of the contextual and strategic determinants of (the different functions of) in-group bias.

**A Contextual-Functional Model**

At this point it is important to be more explicit about what is meant by the terms “function”, “goal” and “motive.” “Functional” behavior is behavior that facilitates certain goals. “Goals” are cognitive representations of desired end-states. Goals can be individual in character (e.g., improving material self-interest) or can be represented at the group level (e.g., social change). “Motives” are seen as more general psychological states that instigate action. In these terms, motives form an umbrella-concept comprising both goals and knowledge and beliefs about what kind of behavior is functional to bring about these goals.

The currently proposed contextual-functional model of in-group bias is represented in Figure 1.2. As can be seen here, social context takes a central place in the model. It is proposed that the context determines which motives and goals will be salient at any given moment, and which behavior will be functional in serving these motives and goals. Furthermore, the function concept is closely linked to actual behavior, whereas a (realized) goal is a possible outcome of this behavior. Finally, there is also a strategic component in the model. This means that people do not “blindly” use in-group bias to serve their goals, but act strategically, for example as the result of audience constraints (Reicher et al., 1995). Thus, the current approach can be seen as representing a modern view of motivation in which people are seen as “strategic goal-achievers” (e.g., Gollwitzer, 1990), rather than as “puppets of internal drives”.

---

4 Although we will refer to functional *in-group bias* as in-group bias that facilitates certain goals, the term “function” in Figure 1.2 is used for beliefs and reasons to instigate in-group bias to these ends. This is similar to how the function concept was measured and modelled in the research presented in Chapter 2, 3, and 4.
A few comments on this motivational model need be made. First, as should already be clear from the above, the current approach is not a so-called “functionalist” one. Functionalism can be seen as reasoning backwards by starting with a given behavior and then considering in what respect it is functional. Instead of this kind of analysis (often criticized because it can lead to circular reasoning) the current model does not imply that all behavior is by definition functional. Instead, it leaves open the possibility that at certain moments in-group bias is not functional or may even be dysfunctional in bringing about a certain goal. The current approach is based on theoretical assumptions that lead to predictions concerning the context in which a given kind of motive will be prevalent. In other words, this leaves open the possibilities that a given motive is served by in-group bias, or by other behavior (e.g., fairness).

Secondly, the model does not imply an ultimate motive that is served by in-group bias, and leaves open the possibility that certain goals may be just preparatory steps for other motives. For example the creation of a positive and meaningful identity (identity function) may be the first step in preparation for collective action (instrumental function). Alternatively, although in-
group bias may facilitate social change in terms of the instrumental function, this in turn may lead to an enhanced or strengthened social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Although Figure 1.2 outlines a general perspective on motivation, the stress in this thesis will be on the relations between context, functions (identity and instrumental), and behavior (in-group bias), as well as on strategic considerations about whether or not in-group bias is functional in the sense that it achieves goals. The contextual part of the model relies partly on principles derived from RCT and SIT; the strategic aspects of the model rely on principles derived from the SIDE model. I call this way of defining the contextual and strategic determinants of different functions of in-group bias a contextual-functional approach to in-group bias. In the next section the two functions of in-group bias will be described in greater detail.

Two Functions of In-group Bias

As explained above, instrumental approaches to in-group bias have focused on the relation between in-group bias and the accomplishment of certain (group) goals. In the current thesis the focus will be on just one such goal, but an important one in a theoretical and practical sense: the facilitation of social change. In other words, the aim concerning the instrumental function will be to show how in-group bias can be functional during inter-group competition and, more specifically, for changing the positions groups take in a status hierarchy. The roots of this function can be found in RCT and in SIT (the collective action option for status enhancement).

There are at least three ways in which in-group bias can fulfill an instrumental function. First, in-group bias in the allocation of resources may be functional because it strengthens the in-group for inter-group competition. This can be related to "resource mobilization theory" within sociology (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). This theory stresses the importance of the acquisition of human and other material resources in preparation for social change. However, the idea that in-group bias may be an important process by which a group prepares itself in material terms for inter-group competition has not previously been tested.

The second way in which in-group bias may serve an instrumental function is by stimulating the in-group for collective action. That is, by openly favoring the in-group or by derogating the out-group, group members may enhance motivation to engage in collective action. Note that this illustrates quite nicely the non-reductionistic character of the current approach: Rather than seeing in-group bias solely as an outcome of motivational processes, in this second "sub-function" in-group bias is itself regarded as the motivator.

The third way in which in-group bias can be functional in instrumental terms is by enhancing group distinctiveness during inter-group competition. During competition it is especially relevant to perceive the groups as clearly distinguishable camps. Thus in addition to,
for example, wearing different shirts during a sports game, in-group bias may help to accentuate inter-group differences further and thereby define which side one is on. This may enhance the perception of in-group solidarity and may help to coordinate action.

The instrumental function of in-group bias that is proposed here can potentially address important lacunae in the existing literature. For example, as noted above, although RCT has focused on how in-group bias may reflect inter-group competition, the theory has been less specific with respect to how in-group bias facilitates such competition. That is, for RCT, in-group bias is more a by-product of inter-group competition than a process that drives it. By making mediating processes more explicit, the instrumental function of in-group bias can fill this gap in the literature on RCT. However, the same argument can to some extent be made about SIT, as well: Although this theory more explicitly describes in-group bias in terms of questioning the status hierarchy, this theory is also somewhat unspecific with respect to how in-group bias may facilitate social change. In sum, although the roots of the instrumental function can be found in previous theory, it has some unique and empirically unexplored aspects.

The identity function of in-group bias is defined as in-group bias aimed at creating or expressing a positive and meaningful social identity. In other words, this function divides into two sub-functions; the creation of an identity based on group membership when such an identity does not yet exist, and the expression of one’s social identity when it does already exist. In the first case the central goal is to make sense of the social environment in a way that favors the ingroup; in the second case the goal is to “celebrate” or even “glorify” the positive value of one’s group (Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2001).

The ways in which in-group bias can help to create a positive and meaningful social identity is already described by SIT and SCT. However, as was illustrated above, there is not much direct evidence for the underlying motivations (i.e., the meaning and valence principles). Drawing distinctions between different functions of in-group bias may be helpful for obtaining more insight into, for example, the controversial status of the “self-esteem hypothesis”. That is, it can be predicted that in-group bias will be especially likely to lead to enhanced self-esteem if it fulfills an identity rather than an instrumental function. In addition, the identity approach has been somewhat silent about the ways in which in-group bias can be functional in identity terms after a positive and meaningful identity has been formed. The identity-expressive function that is proposed here can help to fill this gap in the literature. In sum, although it was inspired by research within the identity tradition of work on inter-group relations, the identity function of in-group bias as described here also has unique aspects that have not previously been explored.

Besides the unique aspects of the two specific functions, the current approach contributes in at least two ways to the literature on inter-group relations: First, it goes beyond single processes in explaining in-group bias. That is, the aim of the current framework is to
show that in-group bias can serve different functions in different contexts. The highly diverse and complex character of in-group bias suggests that it is not always one and the same thing. By drawing distinctions between different functions of in-group bias, and by stressing the context-dependence of (different functions of) in-group bias, more insight into its social and diverse character can be gained. Second, and relatedly, the current analysis also helps to integrate the different approaches to in-group bias. As was illustrated above, identity and realistic conflict factors may interact to predict in-group bias. Moreover, interdependence and identity approaches may in combination provide the best explanation for behavior within the MGP. By distinguishing different functions of in-group bias (rather than championing a single process derived from a single framework) the current functional approach helps to integrate the instrumental and identity perspectives on in-group bias.

In the next section the "independent variable" side of the model will be presented in terms of the contextual determinants of (the functions of) in-group bias. Moreover, I provide an overview of the following chapters in which the model is tested. Not every single prediction that will be tested is described here in detail; the aim is to present the general rationale behind the model.

The Present Thesis: Overview and Hypotheses

The contextual-functional model of in-group bias presented here will be tested in seven studies that are described in the course of three chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4). It will take us from the minimal inter-group situation in the first study to a more lively inter-group situation on the soccer stands in the seventh study. There will also be a shift from more basic psychological processes (in Chapter 2) to the interplay between these processes and the social structure (in Chapter 3) and back again to more abstract psychological processes that can be distilled from this interplay (in Chapter 4).

More concretely, in Chapter 2 the distinction between an identity and an instrumental function of in-group bias will be tested in a minimal group setting. The aim will be to define the circumstances under which in-group bias can facilitate the creation of a positive social identity (identity function) or group performance during an inter-group competition. To this end a distinction is drawn between relatively "meaningless" (i.e., minimal) contexts, on the one hand, and more "realistic conflict", on the other. Beyond specifying the basic contextual determinants of the two functions of in-group bias, a second goal of the work presented in Chapter 2 will be to integrate the identity and instrumental approaches to in-group bias. Although the study on the merger of faculties described earlier has already illustrated the interplay of identity and realistic conflict factors, the research reported in Chapter 2 defines more precisely the circumstances under which one of these two factors plays a primary role in explaining in-group bias. This means that theoretical integration is not the end-state of this thesis but rather the starting-point of
new research on the different functions that in-group bias can serve. Although I make no claim that the identity or instrumental approach is “better” in explaining in-group bias, the identity-creation function is expected to take a certain precedence over the instrumental function because a group must be to some extent meaningful for its members before they can act on basis of this group membership (e.g., in instrumental terms).

Having established a distinction between, and a theoretical foundation of, the two functions of in-group bias, a discussion of socio-structural and strategic determinants of these functions follows in Chapter 3. On the basis of SIT a distinction is drawn between two social structural variables: the status differences between in-group and out-group and the stability of these differences (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). On the basis of SIT it can be predicted that the social change facilitating (i.e., instrumental) function of in-group bias will be especially prevalent in low status groups. Moreover, it is predicted that the identity-expressive function of in-group bias will be more prevalent in high status groups than among low status groups (on the grounds that high status groups have more reason to celebrate positive group-distinctiveness than low status groups have; Leach et al., 2001). Although it is also predicted that these basic relationships will be moderated by the stability of the status differences, these predictions are rather complex, as we will see. Discussion of the influence of the stability of status-differences on the functionality of in-group bias will therefore be postponed until Chapter 3.

Another part of the model that will be tested in Chapter 3 is the set of strategic considerations that may lie at the heart of the expression of in-group bias. Drawing on the SIDE model, the influence of audience on the functionality of in-group bias will be tested (Reicher et al., 1995). It is expected that people will be somewhat reluctant to use in-group bias for instrumental reasons in front of an out-group audience, because doing so might provoke the out-group (Reicher & Levine, 1994). That is, when out-group members witness the expression of in-group bias this may stimulate them to engage in inter-group competition which, in turn, may hinder social change. Thus, we expect people to act strategically and to use in-group bias for instrumental reasons only in an intra-group context.

A final factor that will be addressed in Chapter 3 is the kind of in-group bias that is expressed. A distinction can be drawn between in-group bias in the allocation of material resources (material in-group bias) versus more symbolic and abstract claims of in-group superiority and out-group inferiority (symbolic in-group bias). This distinction will be referred to as the content of in-group bias. It is expected that in-group bias serving the instrumental function will be stronger on material dimensions that help the group to grow stronger in preparation for social change (see also McCarthy & Zald, 1977). In turn, in-group bias serving identity-expression is expected to be especially strong on symbolic measures that help to celebrate positive-distinctiveness in more general and abstract terms.
In the fourth and final "empirical" chapter, there will be a shift from the social structure as a predictor for identity or instrumental functions to more general psychological processes. Specifically, the extent to which people feel that their group’s value is being reinforced or threatened will be under examination here (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). It is proposed that group-threatening situations instigate behaviors directed at changing the situation (instrumental action) whereas circumstances that reinforce the group’s positive value will lead to in-group bias as a form of identity-expression. Feelings of group threat and reinforcement can be seen as mediating between structural determinants and the two functions of in-group bias (e.g., low status is threatening, leading to in-group bias for instrumental reasons). However, these two processes also have additional explanatory value because they are more abstract and general in character than socio-structural factors. For instance, the value of a high status group can also be threatened by means of negative inter-group comparisons. Although this does not necessarily mean that the favorable status-position is totally undermined, it may still trigger the motivation to protect and strengthen the group’s position.

Apart from threat and reinforcement, two additional factors will be addressed in Chapter 4 that may be helpful in distinguishing identity and instrumental functions of in-group bias. The first is a second dimension of the kind of in-group bias that is used, namely whether it refers to in-group favoritism or to out-group derogation. This will be called the direction of in-group bias. It can be predicted that identity functions will be more directly served by in-group favoritism than by out-group derogation (Reynolds et al., 2000). What mainly matters for creating or expressing one’s social identity is what makes the in-group a positive-distinctive entity. However, the instrumental function of in-group bias is expected to be served by both in-group favoritism and out-group derogation. During inter-group competition, social change can be obtained both by optimizing the performance of the in-group (e.g., stimulated by in-group favoritism) or by undermining the out-group (“disarmed” by out-group derogation).

A second (and somewhat indirect) indicator of what function in-group bias may have is the type of group that is favored or derogated. A general distinction can be drawn between "social groups" (e.g., a sports team, a task force) and “social categories” (e.g., nationality, gender; Rabbie, 1993; for a similar distinction in terms of “common bond” and “common identity” groups, see Prentice, Miller, & Lightdale, 1994). We propose that identity functions apply both to social groups and to social categories. However, with respect to the instrumental function we predict that this function is more prevalent in social groups than in social categories because social groups are often defined by instrumental goals (e.g., sports teams). Moreover, because social groups are often smaller and allow more direct communication between its members, instrumental motives may be more directly served by in-group bias in these kinds of group than in social categories. This distinction is not a sharp one, however: some social
categories (e.g., communists) are also defined in terms of more or less instrumental goals (social change).

The variables that were described above (social structure, communicative context, content/direction of in-group bias, type of group) together with in-group bias and its two functions form the central architecture of the present contextual-functional model. In addition to these, some further indicators of functions of in-group bias will be assessed. For example, in the work presented in Chapters 2 and 3 the participants’ willingness to invest effort in the inter-group competition will also be measured. It is predicted that the more a person is willing to use in-group bias for instrumental reasons (e.g., as a result of low group status), the more he or she will be willing to work for social change. Measures of self-esteem will serve as indicators of the identity function of in-group bias. It is predicted that the creation or expression of a positive self-concept based on group membership will result in higher levels of self-esteem. As noted above, distinguishing between the different functions of in-group bias may also result in greater insight into the circumstances in which self-esteem is enhanced by in-group bias (Abrams & Hogg, 1988).

The final chapter of the present thesis will be the general discussion in which the most important results will be summarized, general conclusions will be drawn, and directions for further research will be suggested. The empirical chapters are written in such a way that they can be read independently from the rest of this thesis. This means that there may be some overlap between the present introductory chapter and the theoretical aspects of the empirical chapters.