

CHAPTER NINE

THE SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF GROUP PROPERTY: IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERGROUP CONFLICT AND TERRORISM

SHANNON P. CALLAHAN
AND ALISON LEDGERWOOD
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

Abstract

Symbolic group property such as historic territory and iconic buildings frequently play a role in terrorism and intergroup conflict. Yet what is it that can make people willing to kill or even die for the destruction or preservation of group property? In this chapter, we explore the psychological reasons that drive people to care deeply about property and other symbols of group identity, summarizing relevant research and discussing implications for the study of conflict and terrorism. In Part I, we review a series of experiments suggesting that the mere presence of group symbols such as flags or logos can make a group seem more real and cohesive, a finding that offers insight into why groups both attack and defend symbolic property. In Part II, we describe research identifying key variables that impact the value people place on group property and their willingness to aggressively defend it, as well as strategies for mitigating the perceived importance of group property in order to potentially defuse contentious situations.

Keywords: social identity, intergroup relations, conflict, terrorism, symbols, national monuments

Terrorism, regardless of its ultimate motivation, often focuses on symbolic targets. Al-Qaeda's 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center provide one vivid illustration. Other examples abound: the 1996 bombing of the Atlanta Olympics by a member of the radical Christian Identity Movement, the 1992 attack on London's Baltic Exchange by the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and the 2010 attempt to destroy Swiss IBM headquarters by eco-terrorists. State actors, too, have realized the power of such targets: In 2001, for instance, the ruling Taliban destroyed two ancient statues of Buddha and in 2011, the Bahraini government demolished the Pearl Monument after it became a symbol of the Arab Spring uprisings. Even when these actions have no casualties, there can still be something profoundly distressing about the destruction of symbolic buildings or monuments. Yet why is this the case? More broadly, why do people seem to care so much about symbolic group property in the first place?

Research across disciplines has established that people frequently use objects to represent aspects of their identity (e.g., Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981). Importantly, then, an attack on symbolic property is not merely an attack on the property itself—it is also an attack on what that property represents: the abstract values, attributes, goals, and/or history of the group that are captured by the concrete object. However, although the tendency for people to imbue property with symbolic meaning is well-established, less is known about when and why people use property to symbolize group identity in this way. How do symbols change people's perceptions of a group? And when and why are people particularly motivated to adopt and defend these group symbols?

In this chapter, we will describe two ongoing lines of social psychological research that are working to answer these questions. In Part I, we will review a series of experiments examining the effect that the mere presence of identity symbols such as flags and logos can have on people's perceptions of a group other than their own. In Part II, we will describe findings regarding key variables that impact the value people place on their own group's symbolic property and their willingness to aggressively defend it. Throughout the chapter, we will discuss the implications of this research for the study of terrorism and conflict, as well as suggesting areas for future research and potential interventions to reduce or prevent aggression over group property.

Experimental Social Psychology: A Primer

The research described in this chapter employs an experimental approach that aims to uncover basic psychological processes using carefully controlled paradigms that permit strong causal inferences—a research method that has both advantages and drawbacks. The advantages stem from the fact that carefully controlled experiments allow researchers to manipulate key psychological variables while holding all else constant. This ultimately allows social psychologists to shed light on basic principles of human behavior and the psychological processes that govern them. The primary goals of such experiments are to create settings where it is possible to draw definitive conclusions about the causal impact of one variable on another (by randomly assigning participants to experimentally manipulated conditions), while simultaneously maximizing psychological realism (the extent to which the experimental setting elicits the same psychological processes that would be evoked in the real world, regardless of whether it actually looks like a setting that one would encounter in the real world).

The downside to this approach, however, is that these carefully controlled experiments are often conducted with convenience samples and can employ procedures that—while psychologically engaging—seem quite different from real-world settings. It is therefore useful to consider the extent to which experimental findings will generalize to other populations and contexts. Importantly, considerable research suggests that the basic psychological processes uncovered in experimental research on group identity and intergroup relations over the past several decades often generalize across populations, identities, and cultures (e.g., Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010; Mummendey, Klink, Mielke, Wenzel, & Blanz, 1999; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; see also Anderson, Lindsay, & Bushman, 1999; Mitchell, 2012). For instance, the basic psychological tendency to favor one's own group over an out-group was first studied in a carefully controlled, psychologically engaging, and yet highly artificial laboratory context: Participants were divided into two groups on the basis of a trivial distinction, and then asked to allocate resources between the two groups (Tajfel, 1970). This research revealed that even trivial group distinctions can lead people to display biases in favor of their own group—a phenomenon that has now been documented and further elaborated across a wide variety of social groups, from artificial groups created in the laboratory to longstanding and meaningful social identities such as Israelis and Palestinians (see Betencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001, for a review).

The research in this chapter draws on this tradition of experimentally manipulating critical variables of interest while controlling other potential sources of variability, using convenience samples of primarily undergraduate students rather than randomly sampling from the population. Given the often close correspondence between social identity processes observed within the laboratory and outside of it, we can be confident that the basic psychological mechanisms and phenomena observed in these experiments are likely to generalize to other people and groups. At the same time, one fruitful and important direction for future research is to test and elaborate the basic processes described here in more highly charged contexts that involve meaningful and entrenched social identities.



Figure 9-1. Sample group identity symbols. From left to right: The national flag for the United States of America, the crescent and star symbol commonly used to represent the Islamic religion, and Gerald Holtom's 1958 peace sign, a global symbol of anti-war and disarmament movements.

Part I: The Impact of Flags and Logos on Group Perception

Group identity symbols, both official and unofficial, are ubiquitous. Our social environment is filled with objects, places, and individuals that people have tacitly or explicitly agreed represent group identity in some way. For example, flags can represent nations, icons might signify religions, and logos can represent social movements, terrorist groups, or corporations. Yet despite their seeming omnipresence, the potential effects that flags and logos have on the way people think about groups is not often considered. Although such symbols surround us, we often all but ignore them. Nevertheless, they may dramatically influence the way we respond to different groups.

Symbols and the Reality of Groups

In our research, we have theorized that one important effect that identity symbols like flags and logos can have is to make groups seem more like valid entities; in other words, symbols can *reify* groups (Callahan & Ledgerwood, 2012a). Given that group symbols are often highly visible and even tangible, we propose that such symbols can instantiate the abstract concept of group identity and ground it in the real world. That is, having identity symbols can make collectives seem like cohesive groups as opposed to loose assemblies of individuals. This psychological sense that a group is real—a concept called *entitativity* (from the word “entity”) by social psychologists—can have many important implications for intragroup and intergroup behavior.

Known origins of the “groupiness” of groups. Social psychologists have been studying what makes a group seem real and unified for over 60 years (e.g., Campbell, 1958; Hamilton, Sherman, & Rodgers, 2004). From this research, we know that the sense of a group as being a real, cohesive entity can come from several different types of cues (e.g., Hong, Levy, & Chiu, 2001). One category of cues taps into the “essence” of the group: how similar the group members appear to be, whether they seem permanently linked, and whether they seem to share psychological traits. Another category has more to do with the actions of the group: how the group members interact, whether they have shared history, and the extent to which they wish to achieve the same goals. Though these categories of cues are often related, they can also be used independently to infer that a group seems real and unified—for instance, whereas families are seen as highly entitative due to their shared essence, a group of people working on a project together can seem highly entitative due to their shared actions (e.g., Lickel et al., 2000).

Consequences of perceived groupiness. This perception that a group is a real, cohesive entity can have important consequences for attitudes and behavior. Perceived groupiness is associated with an increased sense of “potency.” Groups that seem like real entities are perceived as more effective and better able to achieve their desired outcomes (e.g., Crawford & Salaman, 2012). In fact, such groups may actually *be* more effective! Research suggests that people identify and cooperate more with groups that seem like real entities (e.g., Castano et al., 2002; Gaertner et al., 2006), which could enhance the group’s ability to achieve its goals. If people strongly identify with a group and are more willing to work with fellow group members, it is more likely that the group can achieve its key

aims. Overall, then, belonging to groups that seem real and unified tends to be particularly rewarding (e.g., Sherman, Hamilton, & Lewis, 1999).

However, there is also a dark side to groupiness. As groupiness increases, groups tend to be less tolerant of negative in-group members and are more likely to turn on their own “black sheep” (Lewis & Sherman, 2010). This may be because such groups are seen as having greater collective responsibility, so that group members are held more responsible for each others’ actions (Denson et al., 2006). Thus, members of highly unified groups may be more likely to turn on other members who act against the group’s interests.

Importantly, another negative consequence of groupiness is that it can increase perceived threat (Dasgupta, Banaji, & Abelson, 1999). Groups that seem like real entities can also be seen as more menacing. Presumably, this sense of threat is linked to the heightened potency that highly unified groups seem to have. When our own groups are high in groupiness, potency is an asset: it suggests our group will be effective and efficient. However, potency can be more ambiguous when it characterizes a group other than our own: If the group is a rival or a potential rival, increased efficacy and efficiency can also mean increased competition and danger.

Symbols and perceptions of threat. Drawing on this latter research, we hypothesized that if symbols help to make a group seem real and unified, they could lead out-groups to seem more potent and threatening. Thus, the mere presence of a symbol could lead people to feel that a group poses a greater threat. Such a finding could have important implications for understanding intergroup behavior: For instance, it would suggest that identity symbols may often become targets of aggression because they seem closely tied to the threat posed by a given group.

To test the basic idea that merely having a symbol could make a group seem more threatening, we adapted an experimental paradigm that previous researchers had designed to test how changing specific qualities of a group can influence people’s perceptions and feelings about that group. By creating novel groups to show participants, this paradigm avoids the complex and potentially deeply entrenched sets of pre-existing beliefs that participants would have about real groups. Using novel groups therefore allows researchers to isolate and cleanly manipulate a particular quality of the group (such as the similarity of the group members) while holding all else constant, in order to determine how that variable causally impacts group judgments.

For example, previous research using novel groups of fictitious alien creatures called “Greebles¹” had established that visual similarity among group members can heighten perceived threat: Participants felt that groups of Greebles seemed more threatening when they were all the same color, compared to when they were different colors (Dasgupta et al, 1999). In our experiment, we sought to test whether the mere presence of a symbol would have a similar effect. We showed participants three different kinds of Greeble groups: different-colored Greebles (control condition), same-colored Greebles (high similarity condition) and different-colored Greebles standing next to a Greeble flag (symbol condition). Participants were asked to rate how threatening each group seemed, as well as the extent to which the group seemed united, organized, and interconnected—all hallmarks of groupiness.

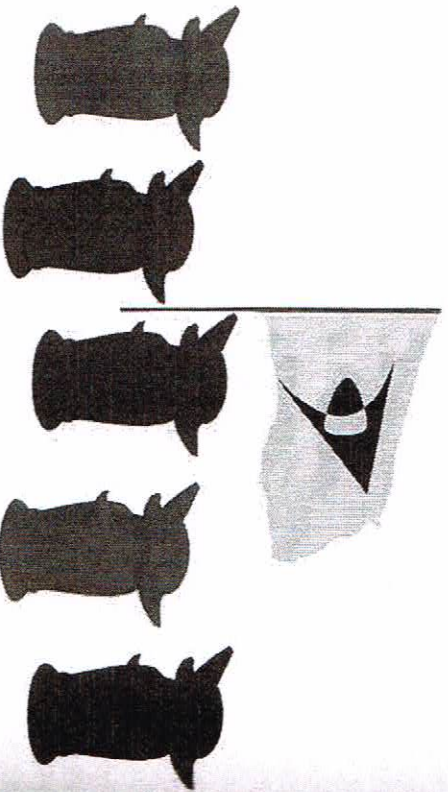


Figure 9-2. Sample Greebles in the symbol condition in Callahan & Ledgerwood, 2012a. Although the Greebles shown here are in grayscale, in the experiment the stimuli appeared in color. (Stimulus images courtesy of Michael J. Tarr, Center for the Neural Basis of Cognition and Department of Psychology, Carnegie Mellon University, <http://www.tarrlab.org/>.)

As expected, we replicated the pattern found in previous research: Relative to the differently-colored control Greebles, same-colored Greebles were seen as more threatening and more groupy (e.g., united and

¹ Greebles were originally created by Scott Yu at Yale University, and first appeared in Gaucher & Tarr (1997).

interconnected). More importantly, the mere presence of a symbol had a similar effect: Compared to the control Greebles, the Greebles with a flag were also seen as significantly more threatening and groupy. Thus, even in the absence of shared group characteristics, having a symbol can make a group seem more real, unified, and potentially menacing.

A related series of studies extended these results beyond flags to test whether merely reading that a group has a logo might similarly enhance perceptions of groupiness. In particular, we were interested in whether a group that might not otherwise seem real and unified (e.g., a collection of individuals who walk their dogs together or watch sports at the same bar once a week) could be reified by simply having a group logo. Participants in these studies read short descriptions about several different types of groups (such as dog walkers). Importantly, one of the group descriptions mentioned that the group had a logo, whereas the other group descriptions did not. To measure perceived groupiness, we then asked participants to select which group seemed the most cohesive and most real. Our results showed that participants consistently selected the group with the logo as the most real and unified, regardless of whether that group involved walking dogs, watching sports, or some other activity. Thus, simply knowing that a group has a symbol is sufficient to psychologically transform a collection of individuals into a real group.

Interestingly, our research indicates that symbols affect many different attributes of groupiness: Merely knowing that a group has a symbol makes group members seem more similar, cohesive, and closely linked, and makes the group itself seem more organized and important to its members. Across our different studies, then, the mere presence of a group symbol appears to have a robust and sweeping effect on group perception.

Taken together, these experiments provide key support for our hypothesis that symbols can reify groups. Groups with symbols were seen as more real, cohesive, and threatening than groups without symbols. Given what we already know about the consequences of perceived groupiness for how people feel about and behave toward groups, these findings have potentially important implications for the study of conflict and terrorism, and can suggest fruitful areas of future research and exploration.

Implications for Conflict and Terrorism

We turn now to discuss what we see as two of the most important implications of this research for the study of intergroup conflict and terrorism. First, we describe how understanding the impact of symbols on

group perception can shed light on how people think about different terrorist groups and interpret their actions. Second, we suggest that the link between symbols and perceived threat can help explain why symbolic targets often become focal points for attacks by state and non-state actors.

The potential impact of symbols for terrorist movements. Terrorist groups and movements often have some sort of symbol—be it a flag (i.e., al-Qaeda's black banner), a logo, or even an individual (i.e., Osama bin Laden). Given the research we have described suggesting that symbols can have robust effects on group perception, it seems likely that such symbols tend to make terrorist groups and movements seem more "real," more efficacious, and more threatening to those outside the group.

Moreover, if we extrapolate from what is already known regarding the effects of perceived groupiness on group member behavior, a terrorist group with an identity symbol may not only be *perceived* as more potent but may actually *be* better able to achieve its aims, due to heightened identification and collaboration on the part of its members. Because the group may be less tolerant of misbehavior among its members, group members may conform to group pressure and influence more, leading members to copy the beliefs and behaviors of others in their group and be less independent (e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Hogg, 1992; Schacter, 1951). In sum, having an identity symbol might make a terrorist group or movement matter more to its members, increase its members' efficiency at working towards their objectives, and heighten members' tendency to yield to group pressure, causing them to behave more uniformly.

The presence of identity symbols could also play an important role in influencing how governments determine whether actions are conducted by "terrorist organizations" as opposed to being "isolated incidents," a decision which can have key political and law-enforcement consequences. In the United States, for example, right-wing violence is often framed as "lone wolf" attacks as opposed to being framed as part of a broader movement (e.g. Hewitt, 2003). This "lone wolf" frame may be possible in part because these right-wing movements do not tend to be seen as real or cohesive groups, perhaps due to geographical variability or surface dissimilarities. Highlighting an identity symbol that the perpetrators of such attacks have in common (e.g., a figurehead, a book) could therefore increase the perceived groupiness of these movements and also their perceived threat, which might lead to prosecuting offenders on charges of terrorism and encourage the use of counterterrorism measures to prevent similar attacks in the future. Conversely, governments sometimes wish to categorize certain types of attacks as criminal rather than terrorism, as in

Northern Ireland (Blackbourn, this volume). In these cases, downplaying group symbols may help lessen the groupiness of such movements and facilitate perceiving such actions as criminal. Future research should explore how the presence versus absence of symbols can affect categorizing incidents as either isolated events or part of a larger movement, for terrorist and non-terrorist movements alike.

Perceived groupiness, symbolic property, and intergroup conflict. The tendency for symbols to reify groups could also help account for the key role that symbolic property often plays in intergroup conflicts. Symbols may be seen by both sides as reservoirs of potency that convey a sense of cohesion, unity, and effectiveness. To the in-group, this would be an asset, and symbols would therefore be cherished and defended. To the out-group, however, such potency would be threatening, and attacks on symbolic targets may be attempts to reduce or even eliminate this threat.

Thus, attacks on symbolic targets by state and non-state actors may reflect an effort to reduce a rival's apparent groupiness—and by extension, to weaken the group. For example, by demolishing the Pearl Monument in 2011, the Bahraini government may have wished to make the protesters' movement seem less real, less legitimate, and ultimately less threatening. As another example, killing Osama bin Laden—the figurehead of al-Qaeda—could be seen as eliminating a powerful symbol of that group. Regardless of whether these groups were actually weakened by these events, they might still be *perceived* as less threatening by those outside the group in question. Consistent with this notion, Americans have reported they fear terrorism less since bin Laden's death (Saad, 2011).

As to whether targeting symbols does in fact weaken groups, this is an open question. This strategy of attacking identity symbols might be particularly effective with newly-formed groups whose unity and cohesiveness are not yet well-established, as the loss of a symbol might profoundly impact the beliefs and behaviors of the group's members. Such a strategy might also be particularly effective with established groups that seem ambiguously cohesive, such as broad political movements or terrorist groups. However, groups that are less ambiguous in their cohesion—such as nations—may be more resilient to such attacks because they often have access to both numerous identity symbols (e.g., flags, anthems, monuments, and leaders) and numerous other qualities that enhance perceived groupiness (e.g., a well-established common history, shared goals, and shared cultural values). For example, following the 9-11 attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, it is possible that al-Qaeda perceived the United States as less threatening. Yet the United States' actual behaviors

—heightened national identification and a militaristic response—suggest the U.S. did not perceive itself as less of a real and cohesive group. Future research on symbolic targets and groupiness should explore this distinction between how group perceptions change from the perspective of the perpetrator and victim in response to the same attack.

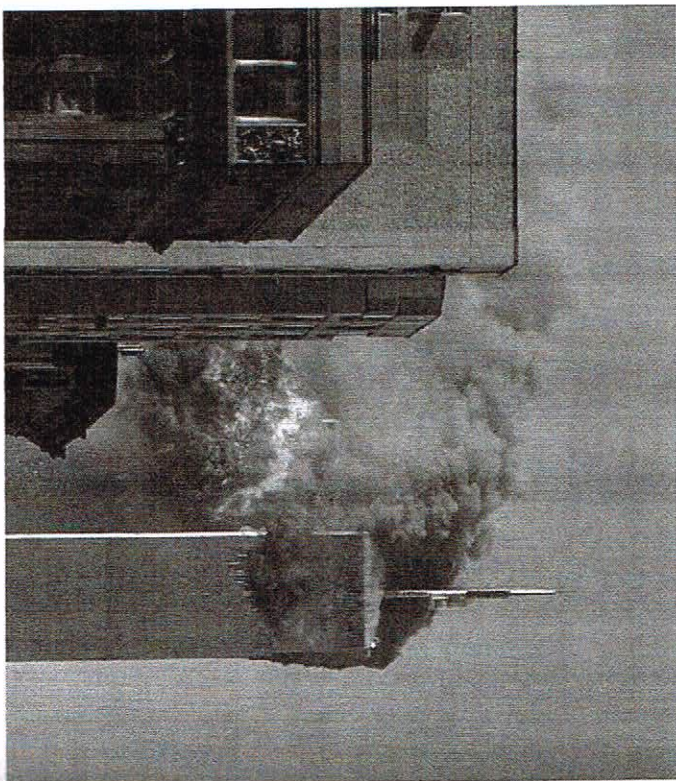


Image 9-1. An example of an attack on a group's identity symbol, the September 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. (Image copyright Robert J Fisch and licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.)

Part I Summary

The research reviewed in this section suggests that groups with symbols tend to be seen as more real and unified than groups without symbols. This heightened groupiness can have important implications for how people feel about and judge groups, including how threatening a group seems to be. We have proposed that terrorist groups with symbols might not only be perceived as more menacing, but might even show different intragroup behavior (e.g., heightened efficiency) as the result of

having a symbol. We have also suggested that the tendency for symbols to enhance perceptions of groupiness and threat may be a contributing factor in the selection of symbolic targets by both state and non-state actors. These hypotheses seem worthy of further research, particularly in field settings that can bridge from the experimental work described here to future recommendations for policy-making and potential interventions. Research should also continue to explore the effects that group identity symbols may have on other aspects of group perception, as well as attitudes and behaviors toward one's own group and how these effects can impact intergroup and intragroup behavior.

Having outlined some of the key consequences of group identity symbols for perception and behavior, we turn next to discuss a second line of research focused on identifying when and why people will value and aggressively defend symbols of group identity. Whereas the research described thus far has focused on flags and logos as examples of group identity symbols, the next section focuses on historic group property as another important type of group symbol.

Part II: Property as a Symbol of Group Identity

Symbolism is not restricted to flags and logos: Physical territory and group property can also be symbolic when they are linked to an aspect of group identity such as the group's shared past, the group's characteristics, or the group's future plans. For example, the Free Derry Corner in the Bogside section of Derry in Northern Ireland symbolizes important historical events during the Troubles (Jarman, 2005), and the Burj Dubai—designed to be the world's tallest tower—helps symbolize the modern and prosperous “New Dubai” (Elisheshawy, 2004). In the previous section, we discussed how symbols such as flags and logos may lead groups to be seen as more real and more threatening. Symbolic property such as buildings, monuments, or land should have similar effects, and we have suggested that this may help explain why groups often target another group's symbolic property in the context of terrorism and intergroup conflict.



Image 9-2. An example of symbolic group property, the Free Derry Corner in the Bogside section of Derry. (Image copyright Louise Price and licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.)

Importantly, considering the symbolic function of group property may have critical implications for understanding conflicts over property. Indeed, people seem to care deeply about property that symbolizes group history and identity: Monuments, land, and other forms of symbolic property are often highly valued and staunchly defended. For example, the Al-Aqsa mosque at the Temple Mount—the third most sacred site in Islam—has been a longtime source of contention between Israelis and Palestinians. The desire to protect this site has led to deadly violence on more than one occasion and even may have partially contributed to the start of the Second Intifada (Inbari, 2009). As another example, in 2010, a subset of Americans who perceived the planned construction of a Muslim community center near Ground Zero as a threat to the area's symbolic meaning vehemently protested the center's construction (Mohamed & O'Brien, 2011). Thus, symbolic group property seems to be capable of evoking extreme responses from people in service of its defense.

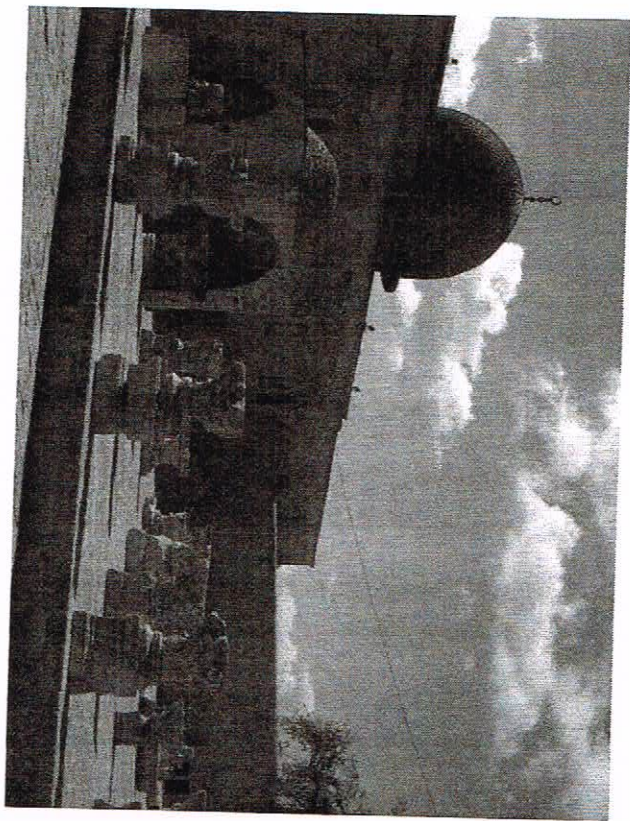


Image 9-3. An example of a contested identity symbol, the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. (Image courtesy of John Unrath.)

As these examples illustrate, symbolic group property can oftentimes be an important element in intergroup conflict. However, most extant research on conflict over property has often assumed that conflict arises over scarce resources, which suggests that violence over group property can be prevented or ameliorated by dividing existing resources, or by adding additional resources and “expanding the pie” (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Pruitt, 2001; Sherif & Sherif, 1953). Although understanding property as a resource can certainly shed light on some conflicts, it seems clear that the meaning of land and monuments often goes beyond their instrumental value as a resource. Few would argue, for example, that an arbitrarily chosen stretch of land could ever replace an area such as Jerusalem, Kashmir, or Mecca for the group members who value these regions. Yet surprisingly little research has moved beyond a resource-based perspective on property in conflict settings, even as scholars have noted that resource-based approaches to conflict resolution often fail, and at times even seem to exacerbate conflict and violence (e.g., Rothman & Olson, 2001).

Value and Symbolic Property

Our research aims to address this gap by focusing on the symbolic meaning of group property, thereby expanding our understanding of conflict over group property beyond what is offered by a simple resource-based account. We feel this distinction between the utilitarian and symbolic function of property is an important one, as understanding the actual reasons that people value group property is critical to knowing how best to resolve conflict and aggression over property and prevent such conflicts from occurring in the first place. In this section, we will describe research designed to identify key variables that impact the value people place on group property and their willingness to aggressively defend it, and discuss strategies for mitigating the perceived importance of group property in order to potentially defuse contentious situations. By considering the symbolic function of property, we seek to shed new light on each of these issues.

In particular, our symbolic perspective on group property suggests that symbols might function as means to a particular end. Specifically, symbols may stand in for actual group characteristics (like status or achievements) as group members strive toward a desired group identity. Building on a wealth of social psychological research on how means are valued during goal pursuit (e.g., Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981), this means-ends framework suggests two important predictions about when and why group members will value and defend material symbols of group identity. First, symbolic property should be especially valued when people have a *strong motivation* to achieve a desired group identity, either because they are highly committed to that identity or because they are in a situation that strengthens the motivation to strive toward a desired group identity. Second, group property should be more valued when it provides an *effective means* by which to pursue the desired identity—that is, when the property is capable of communicating something about group identity to other people.

In the remainder of this section, we highlight several studies in a program of research designed to test these key predictions. We first examine the hypothesis that value will depend on (a) personal commitment to a group identity as well as (b) situational factors that influence the motivation to pursue a group identity. Next, we describe research testing the prediction that the value placed on symbolic group property will depend on (a) the extent to which the property is capable of representing group identity and (b) whether other people recognize the symbolic importance of the property. We then turn to examine the implications of

our perspective for understanding when group members will care more—or less—about who actually owns a material symbol of group identity.

To test our predictions, we developed an experimental paradigm that enabled us to present participants with a potentially important group symbol while still affording us a high degree of experimental control over what they knew about the symbol. In order to do this, we created a story about a building that was ostensibly related to the group history of the participants in a given study (e.g., a building in Jerusalem where a key event in Israeli history took place, or a university building in which the university's founder had once lived). Our initial research with this paradigm showed that participants immediately cared about and valued such a building as a part of their group's identity and history. By creating this story, then, we were able to very precisely influence participants' beliefs about a potentially important group symbol; this allowed us to cleanly manipulate variables such as the strength of the identity motive or the effectiveness of the property as an identity symbol, and to examine their causal impact on value.

Variability in Strength of Identity Motive

From psychological research on goal pursuit, we know that means to an end are more highly valued when people are strongly motivated to achieve that end (see Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Thus, symbolic group property (a means to pursue a desired group identity) should be more highly valued when group identity motives are strong. Moreover, two factors in particular are known to influence the strength of a motive: the extent to which that motive is important to an individual person (their disposition) and whether or not that motive is evoked by a person's current environment (their situation; see Fishbach, 2008; Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). We therefore hypothesized that dispositional and situational differences in the strength of an identity motive would affect the degree to which people value symbolic group property.

Personal commitment. First, we looked at individual, dispositional differences in how committed people are to their group identities. Different members of a group may be more or less committed to their group identity—for example, students at a university vary in how strongly they identify with the university community as a whole. To test whether personal commitment to a group identity would predict the value people place on a symbol of that group identity, we measured New York

University (NYU) students' commitment to their NYU identity, and then presented the students with the story described earlier about a nearby building related to their group's history. We then asked them to rate how valuable they thought the building was, using a classic economic measure of valuation designed to elicit the true monetary value that people place on an object by presenting them with a series of possible transaction prices (see e.g., Kahneman et al., 1990). As predicted, as commitment to NYU identity increased, so too did the value people placed on the historic building (Ledgerwood, Liviatan, & Carnevale, 2007, Study 1). In other words, people who were more strongly committed to their group identity perceived a symbol of that identity as more valuable.

Implications for conflict studies. This research can help us understand when people in actual conflict situations will be more or less likely to value symbolic property, based on their level of commitment to that identity. For example, among the Basque—an ethnic group in Spain and France—many people identify as primarily Basque, whereas others are equally committed to their Spanish or French identities (Martinez-Herrera, 2002). Moreover, not all Basques are nationalists and an even smaller subset are separatists. Therefore, when predicting whether a person will value symbolic group property (in this case, the territory of Basque Country) to such an extent that they want their group to have total autonomy over the property, it may be important to consider their personal commitment to the identity. A strong commitment would presumably lead them to see property symbolic of that identity as highly valuable.

Situational factors. In addition to differences between individuals in the typical level of commitment to group identity, there are also certain situations that enhance people's motivation to strive toward a desired group identity. One such situation is feeling that one's group has lost or is lacking an important attribute of group identity. To test whether such situations would increase the perceived value of symbolic group property, we randomly assigned NYU students to one of two experimental conditions that differed in their portrayal of NYU. In one condition, participants read an ostensible news article suggesting that NYU's reputation was falling—a story designed to convey that NYU was missing a key aspect of desired group identity, which should temporarily strengthen NYU students' objective to strive toward a desired group identity. In the second condition, participants read a news article suggesting that NYU's reputation was rising, thereby conveying that NYU possessed a key aspect of group identity and temporarily subduing the

identity motive. Supporting our hypothesis, students who felt their group's status was falling—and whose identity motives had therefore been situationally heightened—perceived the value of the historic building to be nearly four million dollars higher than those who felt their group's status was rising (Ledgerwood et al., 2007, Study 3). Thus, a threat to group identity led people to substantially increase the value they placed on symbolic group property.

Implications for conflict studies. Our research indicates that threatening group identity—a commonplace occurrence in conflict—can increase the value that people place on symbolic group property. Those who feel like their group has lost or is losing status—a political party that has lost an election, a would-be nation that has lost a war, a religion that is marginalized or losing followers—may be particularly likely to see symbols of their group identity as valuable and important. Importantly, when the value and importance placed on symbolic property increases, people are more likely to want to protect and defend it.

A recent study by Jia, Karpen, & Hirt (2011) illustrates the heightened defensiveness that can follow a loss of group status, and how this can affect intergroup relations. To understand why certain Americans were opposed to the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque" (an Islamic community center near the now symbolic site of the former World Trade Center), these researchers adopted the symbolic perspective we have been describing. They hypothesized that threatening group status would affect the degree to which people wanted to protect Ground Zero from "contamination" by an out-group. Their results showed that when people felt that the status of the U.S. was falling, they were more opposed to the construction of the Islamic community center and other projects (such as a French embassy) that could be seen as challenging or diluting the symbolic significance of the site. Interestingly, these effects were only seen among those who felt highly deferential to their country (i.e., people who said they had a particularly high tendency to honor their country, obey their nation's leaders, and conform to national norms; for more information, see Roccas et al., 2008). Those who were low in deference to their country were less concerned about the Islamic community center, even when the status of the United States was threatened. Overall, this research suggests that threat can lead people who are deferential to a group to strongly defend symbolic group property against actions that could seem to dilute or change the property's symbolic meaning.

Notably, the circumstances that led to the defensiveness observed in this study—threatened group status, high levels of loyalty to one's in-

group, and a contested or controversial symbol—are often seen in intergroup conflicts. When people feel that their group identity is vulnerable and care deeply about that identity, they may be more likely to rally around symbols of their identity, because the symbols may help fill in for what is lacking about the identity and help people feel like the desired group identity has been achieved. For example, survivors of the World War I massacres of Ottoman Christians and their descendants by the Young Turks and survivors of subsequent diasporas—Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek—have continually sought official recognition of these genocides and erected monuments to their dead (e.g., Panossian, 2002). Because the Turkish government vehemently rejects the charges of genocide (Hovannisian, 2003), this lack of acknowledgement coupled with strong group identification likely evokes some degree of group threat and leads survivors and their descendants to seek out resolutions and material symbols validating their tragic history. Because such symbols can stand in for actual attributes or characteristics, in the absence of official acknowledgment from Turkey that these events occurred, these symbols will presumably be more highly valued.

In addition to explaining when and why symbolic property will be highly valued and defended, our symbolic perspective also makes predictions regarding how to lessen perceived value and defensiveness over group property. For example, in the research described earlier, when NYU participants were reassured that their group had a desired quality (high status), they saw symbolic property as less valuable. Because their group identity was not vulnerable, the objective of a desired group identity was not strong, and so potential means to meet that objective (the historical building) were less highly valued. This suggests that affirming a group's status or other important aspects of group identity may help to reduce the importance of specific identity symbols.

Summary. The research we have described thus far suggests that both personal and situational differences in the strength of an identity motive can affect the perceived value of symbolic group property. These empirical findings are consistent with the notion that as the motivation to attain a desired group identity increases, people increasingly value symbols that can help them achieve that desired goal. Thus, the first key prediction of our means-ends framework was supported: The value placed on property as a means by which to symbolize group identity depends on the strength of the identity motive.

Quality of the Symbol

Our second key prediction was that value placed on property should also depend upon the quality of the symbol, or the extent to which property is capable of symbolizing group identity to others. Importantly, not all group property can effectively symbolize group identity. To be a good identity symbol, property must be (a) related to group identity or history, and (b) capable of communicating or symbolizing that identity or history to other people. Next, we will describe research testing each of these variables in turn.

The extent that property represents identity. If the value people place on property depends on its effectiveness as a symbol of group identity, then group property should be valued more highly when it is linked to in-group history and identity, compared to when it is not. To test this idea, we randomly assigned NYU students to one of two experimental conditions that differed in how they described the group-owned building we had used in our earlier studies described above. In the in-group history condition, as in our earlier studies, participants read that one of the founders of NYU had once lived in the building, and that a number of important early meetings had taken place there. In the no history condition, participants only read about the existence of the building, without learning anything about its history. We then measured how valuable participants thought the building was. Supporting our means-ends perspective, students placed greater value on the building when it was related to NYU history and could provide a good symbol of in-group identity, compared to when the building had no symbolic ties (Ledgerwood et al., 2007, Study 4). In another experiment, we asked Israeli participants to rate the value of a building located in West Jerusalem that was either linked to Israeli history (in-group history condition) or Palestinian history (out-group history condition). For instance, in the in-group history condition, participants read that the building was home to the 23rd Zionist congress in 1951. Again, participants valued the building linked to in-group history more highly, presumably because only the building that related to their own group's past could serve as an effective symbol of their in-group identity (Ledgerwood et al., 2007, Study 2). Thus, the value people place on group property seems to reflect the extent to which it represents or symbolizes something about group identity.

Of course, property may be linked to more than just one group's history, and conflicts often arise over property that is related to the histories of multiple groups. To explore how such dual linkages could

impact value, we included another condition in the experiment with the Israeli sample described above, in which the building was linked to both Israeli *and* Palestinian histories. Interestingly, Israeli participants valued the building most highly when it was related to the history of both groups, compared to when it was related to either just Israeli history or just Palestinian history. One reason for this could be that an out-group identity claim on an in-group symbol threatens in-group identity, and, as we saw above, this can lead people to value symbols more highly. Another possibility is that a building linked to both groups' histories that is now in Israeli-controlled territory may convey information about not just the group's own history but also the power dynamic or the difference in status between the two groups.

Implications for conflict studies. This research suggests that when property is linked to multiple group identities—as is the case with Jerusalem, Kashmir, and Kosovo—it may be especially valued, which could both trigger conflicts and pose a key barrier to successful conflict resolution. It is possible that contested symbols may in fact be more valuable because they are contested, and therefore symbolize not just something about the group's identity but about the nature of the conflict. Property that is tied to both groups' histories may also represent the dynamic between the two groups. For the group that this dynamic favors, it could be desirable to represent their victory or power, and property that does so will be especially valued. For the group that this dynamic does not favor, it may be highly desirable to somehow obtain control of the contested symbol, as such an action could stand in for not having equal status and may thereby provide the group with a sense of empowerment.

This research also suggests that symbolism may come fairly easily. In our studies, any connection to in-group history—even one that was previously unknown to our participants—was enough to increase the perceived value of the building. In intergroup conflicts, it is the obvious group identity symbols that attract the most attention, such as famous monuments and historic territory. Our findings suggest that less obvious symbols should not be overlooked or underestimated, as people may very quickly come to view property as valuable when a potential connection to in-group identity is learned or highlighted.

Social recognition of the symbol. To be an effective symbol, property must not only be related to in-group identity—it must also be capable of communicating something about group identity to other people. In other words, symbols are only effective insofar as they are widely recognized

and socially shared (Ledgerwood & Liviatan, 2010). We therefore predicted that strong group identity motives would only increase the value placed on historic group property when the property's link to in-group history was widely recognized. We tested this hypothesis by measuring (or in another study, manipulating) the strength of group identity motives as we did in previous studies described earlier. Next, we once again presented NYU students with information about a building linked to their university's history, but this time we manipulated social recognition by randomly assigning them to read that the link to NYU history was either widely acknowledged (social recognition condition) or known to very few (lack of social recognition condition). Regardless of whether the motive strength was due to individual or situational differences, stronger group identity motives only increased the perceived value of the building when its link to NYU history was widely acknowledged. When nobody else knew about the symbolic meaning of the building, stronger group identity motives had no impact on perceived value. Importantly, these results suggest that group identity motives will only influence the value placed on property when the property can be used to communicate something about group identity to other people.

Implications for conflict studies. This research suggests that historic property is not inevitably seen as highly valuable: In the studies described above, a building related to in-group history was only valued as an effective symbol of group identity when its link to group history was widely shared, and not when this link was unacknowledged by others. When considering what types of group property are likely to be highly valued and contested in a conflict, it is therefore important to consider the extent to which the symbolic importance of the group property is socially recognized by others. Likewise, perceived value may be lower when the symbolic meaning of group property seems unclear, or when there is disagreement about what the property symbolizes. For instance, the Osu Castle in Ghana, which was once the home to colonial rulers but later was the seat of government for independent Ghana, may be perceived as less valuable to Ghanatians because there may be little consensus among group members about what it represents due to its different historical links.

Summary. Our prediction that group property will be valued more when it provides an effective means to symbolize group identity was supported: People valued property more when it was linked to their own group's history and when this link was socially recognized. Thus, symbols that convey something about group identity to others can provide effective

means for striving toward desired group identities, and are therefore especially valued.

Thus far, we have described research suggesting that when an identity motive is strong—either because of a person's disposition or because of the specific situation—people value and defend group property that conveys something about their group identity to others. In other words, as suggested by our means-ends framework, the degree to which people value symbolic group property depends upon the strength of the motive and the effectiveness of the means. Our symbolic perspective therefore helps to shed new light on the question of when and why people value group property.

Defending Symbolic Property

Next, we wanted to broaden the scope of this research to empirically test some of the possible implications of our symbolic perspective for understanding conflict over group property. In the studies described thus far, we have examined how symbolism affected the perceived value of group property. However, as mentioned earlier, symbolic property is not only valued by groups but can also be perceived as something that needs to be defended. Understanding why a group feels they must aggressively defend their ownership of property can be critical for understanding and resolving intergroup conflicts.

To explore this issue, we refined our experimental paradigm to measure group members' desire for their group to aggressively defend its ownership of a building. In these studies, we added information to the story used in our previous research. After informing participants that another party wanted to purchase the building currently owned by the group, we asked them a series of questions that measured the extent to which they wanted their group to aggressively defend its ownership of the building in a negotiation with the other party.

We explored two factors that we believed might influence this ownership defensiveness. First, we predicted that ownership of group property would be more strongly defended when certain basic needs were made salient, because we suspected that such needs might be the original psychological source of the group identity motives we have described. Second, we predicted that ownership of group property would be most important—and thus most strongly defended—when ownership was necessary for the property to effectively symbolize group identity.

Basic needs and symbolic property. Our first prediction was that ownership will be defended more when people are driven to satisfy certain basic human needs. There are several such needs that are thought to be universally held (e.g., Fiske, 2004). One of the reasons that group identity is presumed to be generally important is because it seems to help meet many of these basic needs: For example, it is a source of positive feeling, it can reduce discomforting feelings of uncertainty, it can help manage the existential fear of death, and it can help people feel like they belong (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986; Hogg, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Insofar as group identity serves these basic human needs, we theorized that just like group threat, these basic needs would lead people to increasingly value and defend symbolic group property. Indeed, previous research suggests that when people are in situations where their mortality is salient and they need to manage the resulting existential crisis, they are more uncomfortable with using group identity symbols in inappropriate or disrespectful ways (e.g., using a flag to sift sand from black dye; Greenberg et al., 1995), and recent research from our own lab suggests that when people are made to feel uncertain, they are more opposed to flag burning. Thus, there is some evidence that certain basic needs may contribute to feeling protective towards symbols.

In the research we will describe next, we wanted to particularly focus on the need to affiliate or belong, as it is one of the most basic human needs (e.g., Bakan, 1966; Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and is even thought by some to be ultimate root of social behavior (e.g., Fiske, 2004). We wished to specifically consider how such belonging needs may affect defensiveness over the ownership of group property—an issue with important implications for intergroup conflict.

Like other motives, basic needs can vary in strength both from one individual to the next and from one situation to the next. We considered both sources of variation in belonging needs in two experiments (Callahan & Ledgerwood, 2012b). In the first, we measured the baseline strength of each participant's need to belong as a natural individual difference. In the second, we experimentally manipulated the need through use of a subliminal priming task that temporarily increased the strength of this need outside of participants' conscious awareness (e.g., Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). In each experiment, University of California, Davis (UC Davis) students were randomly assigned to read about either a group resource (a university-owned building unrelated to the group's history) or a group symbol (a university-owned building linked to the group's history as in previous studies). We then asked participants to report how aggressively

the university should defend its ownership of the building in a negotiation with the City of Davis.

As predicted, stronger dispositional or situationally-induced belonging needs led to heightened defensiveness over ownership of the symbol. In contrast, the need to belong had no impact on defensiveness over the resource, highlighting again the importance of distinguishing between the symbolic and instrumental functions of group property. The results of these experiments suggest that variations in basic, fundamental needs can predict who might react more strongly to the prospect of losing ownership of a group identity symbol: People who have a stronger desire to affiliate (either due to their disposition or because of the situation) may actually be more likely to endorse defensive and even aggressive actions toward another party.

Implications for conflict studies. This research also suggests that basic needs, which are often not considered when examining the causes of conflict and terrorism, may contribute to the importance that people place on material symbols of group identity. Many things can make belonging needs salient; because it is such a common and important need, it can easily be triggered by the situation. For example, even subtle social rejections can increase people's need to affiliate with and be accepted by others (e.g., Pickett & Gardner, 2005). Factors such as these could be playing an important but as yet unnoticed role in exacerbating aggression over symbolic group property.

Moreover, often in intergroup conflicts, one group's identity is stigmatized or devalued. For example, Palestinians may perceive that they are being collectively devalued as a group in the context of their conflict with Israelis. This perception may amount to a societal rejection of their group, which in turn may lead them to seek out and aggressively defend symbols of their identity, such as the Al-Aqsa mosque at the Temple Mount. Understanding how the basic need to belong and feel accepted influences value and defensiveness over symbolic property could potentially offer insight into situations such as these.

Furthermore, considering basic motives can also suggest conflict interventions that are not often considered. Because belonging is such a basic need, there are many ways to help satisfy the need to affiliate with others beyond one specific group symbol. Research on goal pursuit suggests that there can be many means to meet the same end and that these means are often interchangeable (see Kruglanski et al., 2002). Thus, if participants in our studies had been reminded of an alternate symbol of their university identity (e.g., a mascot), they might have valued the

historic building less. Likewise, if a group cannot have a monument to some important moment in their past, symbolic legislation may effectively substitute for it.

Moreover, people have many group identities and which identity they use—national, religious, ethnic, regional—might also be substitutable in meeting their basic needs. If a person has a heightened need to belong and a certain identity is made salient by the situation, they will likely “use” that identity and whatever symbols are associated with it to meet that need. In fact, preliminary research from our lab suggests that having an identity symbol for one group makes an identity symbol for another group seem less important: University students who were provided with a symbol of their ethnic identity were later less defensive over a symbol of university identity.

That is not to say that certain identities and symbols do not matter more than others. Obviously, certain groups are more central to our identities than others and certain symbols are more cherished than others; these central and cherished means are likely habitually used and more difficult to change. Moreover, certain group identities and symbols could help meet multiple motives, which would make them especially valuable. For example, controlling Kashmir may help satisfy Indians' need to belong; make them feel more certain about the world, and make them feel like their group has high status. Another identity or symbol would be unlikely to fully substitute for Kashmir in meeting all of these needs. However, it could potentially help fulfill some of them, which could—in combination with other strategies—reduce antagonism and promote conditions conducive to successful conflict resolution. As a potentially important tool for defusing conflicts, this concept of interchangeable identities and symbols should be researched more closely, both in tightly controlled studies like the ones described here as well as in the field to ensure that these effects generalize to real conflict situations.

Summary. The research described in this section suggests that ownership of group property is defended more when basic needs such as the need to belong are heightened. We turn next to our second prediction about defensiveness over ownership: namely, that group members will be particularly defensive over group ownership when ownership is necessary to protect a property's symbolic meaning.

Why people care about ownership. Although symbols are often conflated with possessions, people's identities can be symbolized by material objects that they do not own. For example, although it is privately

owned, the iconic Chrysler Building has long been a symbol of New York City: When it was first constructed, it represented Art Deco and the Modern Age, and today it represents the city's illustrious history. As another example, the Mediterranean Sea symbolizes many of the nations it touches, though it is owned by none of them. Therefore, we would argue that a critical advantage that comes from thinking about the symbolic function of property is that it can deemphasize the importance of ownership. That is, a formerly contested symbol may legally belong to one group while still meeting the symbolic function of another group. Ownership may not be necessary for both parties to meet their goals.

Moreover, we propose that ownership becomes particularly important to people when it is needed to protect the symbolic meaning of property. Certain symbols do not need to be protected in order to ensure that they can represent group identity because their protection is ensured by the owner: With respect to the earlier example, the Chrysler Building does not need to be owned by the city in order for it to represent an aspect of New York identity and history; the private companies that own it ensure its protection. However, other property must be protected in order to serve as a group symbol: For example, the Prentice Women's Hospital in Chicago is an iconic Modernist structure that many see as a symbol of the city, yet it faces demolition by its owner in order to allow room for new construction (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2011). Unless the former hospital is owned by a party that will protect it, its symbolism may be lost forever.

Our perspective suggests that ownership will be defended most fiercely when it is needed to protect the symbolism of a monument or site. Consistent with this prediction, research in our lab has shown that students become more defensive over their university's ownership of a historic building when losing ownership to another party will result the building's demolition, compared to when the building will continue to exist regardless of who owns it (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2012c). Moreover, when students learn that a permanent plaque will be posted at the building site communicating its symbolic meaning to the public, it eliminates the defensiveness otherwise evoked by the building's demolition: Students are less aggressive and more willing to cooperate in negotiations over ownership when the symbolic meaning of the site will be preserved through the plaque, despite the building's demolition. Thus, people appear to care most—and become most defensive—about group ownership when it is the only way to protect the symbolic meaning of group property. When another strategy for preserving the property's symbolic meaning is offered, the importance of ownership can be decreased.

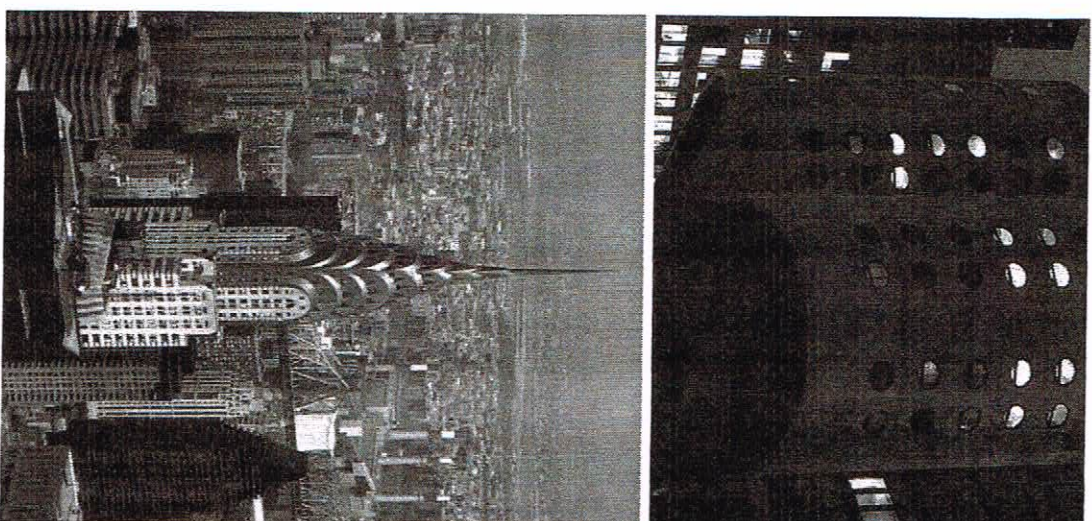


Image 9-4. Examples of city-level group symbols not owned by the city. On the left, the Chrysler Building in New York City, on the right the old Prentice Women's Hospital in Chicago. The former is a National Historic Landmark and is therefore protected; the latter faces potential demolition. (Bottom image courtesy of Allison Ledgerwood; top image copyright Jim Kuhn and licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.)

Implications for conflict studies. This research suggests that ownership becomes particularly important to group members when it represents the only way to protect the symbolic meaning of group property. Therefore, though conflicts over symbolic property are often presented as zero-sum conflicts over ownership, it is possible that ownership may not be the crux of disputes. Although ownership may facilitate the use of symbols to represent group identity, it may not always be necessary.

One important detail of our results deserves note: The plaque was not a panacea. It only reduced defensiveness when the building would otherwise be demolished. If the building would continue to exist, posting a plaque actually seemed to make participants slightly more defensive. It could be that posting a plaque near an existing building makes the building seem more important. Future research should explore when posting plaques such as these—a not uncommon occurrence when dealing with historic buildings—may do more harm than good.

Nonetheless, devising strategies that protect property's symbolic significance for a group could help ameliorate conflicts by reducing the importance that groups place on owning symbolic property. Group members want to be able to represent important aspects of their group identity and to communicate that identity to others; both of these objectives can potentially be achieved without legal ownership of property itself and in some cases even without the property's physical existence.

Summary. In this section, we identified two variables that contribute to how strongly ownership of symbolic group property is defended: the strength of basic human needs that give rise to group identity motives, and whether ownership is necessary to protect the symbolism of group property. Our research suggests that ownership is seen as important in part because it can help satisfy certain universal drives such as the need to belong, and that ownership may be most strongly defended when it is needed to protect the symbolic meaning of group property. By emphasizing the symbolic function of group property, our theoretical perspective may therefore be helpful in changing the conceptualization of certain conflicts over property from zero-sum disputes over ownership to non-zero sum situations where it is possible to simultaneously meet the needs of opposing parties.

Part II Summary

The research reviewed in the second half of this chapter suggests that group property is perceived as particularly important when identity motives or belonging needs are strong and when the property effectively symbolizes something about group identity to other people. Our research also suggests that the heightened value and defensiveness we observed over symbolic property are not inevitable or chronic: People should see a symbolic building as valuable or fiercely defend it from outside threats only if an identity motive is strong, if the property is an effective symbol of group identity, and if ownership is the only way to protect the property's symbolism. If these motives are not strong, or if the symbol does not need protection in order to represent group identity, people should be less aggressive and more cooperative about ownership. Therefore, intergroup conflicts over symbolic property are not necessarily inevitable, but may instead result from a particular confluence of circumstances that can potentially be averted or mitigated.

This research also suggests potential interventions for intergroup conflicts over symbolic property when they do occur. For example, considering motivational reasons as to why people value and defend group property may suggest alternative ways to meet these needs. If conflict resolution focuses only on the pragmatic uses of group property and fails to factor in the many needs that symbolic property helps meet, the intervention is less likely to be successful. Our perspective may therefore help to shed light on why resource-based interventions often fail, and suggest new ideas for promoting successful conflict resolution. Future research should test and elaborate these ideas outside of the laboratory to refine them in the context of complex and entrenched intergroup conflicts.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we summarized two separate yet complimentary lines of research. First, we described how symbols such as flags and logos may reify groups, making them seem more coherent and potentially threatening. We suggested that this sense of "groupiness" and "realness" that symbols impart can help explain people's perceptions of certain terrorist groups and movements—why some groups are seen as more menacing, and why some groups are seen as "terrorists" while other groups are seen as "criminals." We also suggested that this reifying effect of symbols may help to explain why symbolic group targets are so often targeted by state and non-state actors: Groups may wish to target what

they see as one source of threat posed by an out-group and to make their rivals seem less cohesive and menacing.

Second, we suggested that people particularly value symbolic group property when they are highly motivated to achieve a desired group identity, and when property conveys something about group identity to others. We proposed that considering how different symbols and different identities may be interchangeable could help temporarily defuse tense situations. We also suggested that understanding the symbolic function of property and how it can be used to meet identity and belonging needs may help transform what are often seen as zero-sum conflicts into conflicts where all parties can obtain their objectives.

Returning to the question we posed at the outset of this chapter, this research provides new insight into why people care so much about symbols of group identity. Such symbols can serve a number of important psychological functions. Tangible symbols such as flags and property can make our groups seem real. They help us achieve our desired group identities and satisfy fundamental needs such as belonging. They communicate our group identity and history to others. Yet though the research described here has offered insight regarding why and when groups may attack the symbols of others and fiercely defend their own symbols, it has also suggested that such actions are not inevitable. By understanding the psychological reasons that drive people to care deeply about group symbols, then, we can begin to consider new ways of reducing the conflict and violence that often centers on property and other symbols of group identity.

References

- Anderson, C. A., Lindsay, J. J., & Bushman, B. J. (1999). Research in the psychological laboratory: Truth or triviality? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8, 3-9.
- Bakan, D. (1966). *The duality of human existence: An essay on psychology and religion*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). Need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497-529.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, 139-168.
- Bettencourt, B. A., Dorr, N., Charlton, K., & Hume, D. L. (2001). Status differences and in-group bias: A meta-analytic examination of the effects of status stability, status legitimacy and group permeability. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127, 520-542.
- Brewer, M. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 475-482.
- Callahan, S. P., & Ledgerwood, A. (2012a). *Why flags & logos matter: Group symbols increase perceived entitativity*. Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology 13th annual convention, San Diego, CA.
- . (2012b). *Buildings and belonging: Understanding the antecedents of using symbols to represent group identity*. Manuscript in preparation.
- . (2012c). *Transcending ownership: Group identity symbols need not belong to the group*. Manuscript in preparation.
- Campbell, D. T. (1958). Common fate, similarity, and other indices of the status of aggregates of persons as social entities. *Behavioural Sciences*, 3, 14-25.
- Castano, E., Yzerbyt, V., Bourguignon, D., & Seron, E. (2002). Who may enter? The impact of in-group identification on in-group/out-group categorization. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 315-322.
- Crawford, M. T., & Salaman, L. (2012). Entitativity, identity, and the fulfillment of psychological needs. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48, 726-730.
- Dasgupta, N., Banaji, M. R., & Abelson, R. P. (1999). Group entitativity and group perception: Associations between physical features and psychological judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 991-1003.
- Denson, T. F., Lickel, B., Curtis, M., & Stenstrom, D. M. (2006). The roles of entitativity and essentiality in judgments of collective responsibility. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 9, 43-61.
- Deutsch, M., & Gerard, H. B. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology*, 51, 629-36.
- Dittmar, H. (1992). *The social psychology of material possessions*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Elisheshtawy, Y. (2004). Redrawing boundaries: Dubai, an emerging global city. In Y. Elisheshtawy, *Planning Middle Eastern cities: An urban kaleidoscope in a globalizing world*. Routledge: London.
- Ferguson, M. J., & Bargh, J. (2004). Liking is for doing: The effects of goal pursuit on automatic evaluation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 557-572.

- Fishbach, A. & Ferguson, M. J. (2007). The goal construct in social psychology. In A.W. Kruglanski & E.T. Higgins (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 490-515). New York: Guilford Press.
- Fishbach, A. (2008). The dynamics of self-regulation. In (Eds), 11th Sydney Symposium of Social Psychology. New York: Psychology Press.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fisher, R., & Ury, W. (1981). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Fiske, S. T. (2004). *Social beings: A core motives approach to social psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Gauthier, I., & Tarr, M. J. (1997). Becoming a "Greeble" expert: Exploring mechanisms for face recognition. *Vision Research*, 37, 1673-1682.
- Gaertner, L., Iuzzini, J., Witt, M. G., & Oriña, M. M. (2006). Us without them: Evidence for an intragroup origin of positive in-group regard. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 426-439.
- Greenberg, J., Porteus, J., Simon, L., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (1995). Evidence of a terror management function of cultural icons: The effects of mortality salience on the inappropriate use of cherished cultural symbols. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 1221-1228.
- Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (1986). The causes and consequences of a need for self-esteem: A terror management theory. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *Public self and private self* (pp. 189-212). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.
- Hamilton, D. L., Sherman, S. J., & Rodgers, J. S. (2004). Perceiving the groupness of groups: Entitativity, homogeneity, essentialism, and stereotypes. In V. Yzerbyt, C. M. Judd, and O. Corneille (Eds.), *The psychology of group perception: Perceived variability, entitativity, and essentialism* (pp. 30-46). New York: Psychology Press.
- Hewitt, C. (2003). *Understanding terrorism in America. From the Klan to al Qaeda*. New York: Routledge.
- Hogg, M. A. (1992). *The social psychology of group cohesiveness: From attraction to social identity*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

- (2000). Subjective uncertainty reduction through self-categorization: A motivational theory of social identity processes. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 11, 223-255.
- Hogg, M. A., Adelman, J. R., & Blagg, R. D. (2010). Religion in the face of uncertainty: An uncertainty-identity theory account of religiousness. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14, 72-83.
- Hong, Y., Levy, S. R., & Chiu, C. (2001). The contribution to the lay theories approach to the study of groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5, 98-106.
- Hovannisian, R. (2003). *Looking backward, moving forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Inbari, M. (2009). *Jewish fundamentalism and the Temple Mount: Who will build the Third Temple?* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Jarman, N. (2005). The place of the mural in the symbolic construction of space. In M.E. Geisler (Ed.), *National symbols, fractured identities: Contesting the national narrative*. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England.
- Jia, L., Karpen, S. C., & Hirt, E. R. (2011). Beyond anti-Muslim sentiment: Opposing the Ground Zero Mosque as a means to pursuing a stronger America. *Psychological Science*, 22, 1327-1335.
- Kahneman, D., Knetsch, J., & Thaler, R. (1990). Experimental test of the endowment effect and the Coarse theorem. *Journal of Political Economy*, 98, 1325-1348.
- Kruglanski, A. W., Shah, J. Y., Fishbach, A., Friedman, R., Chun, W. Y., & Sleeth-Keppler, D. (2002). A theory of goal systems. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 34 (pp. 331-378). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Lakin, J. L., & Chartrand, T. L. (2003). Using nonconscious behavioral mimicry to create affiliation and rapport. *Psychological Science*, 14, 334-339.
- Ledgerwood, A., & Liviatan, I. (2010). The price of a shared vision: Group identity goals and the social creation of value. *Social Cognition*, 28, 401-421.
- Ledgerwood, A., Liviatan, I., & Carnevale, P. J. (2007). Group identity completion and the symbolic value of property. *Psychological Science*, 18, 873-878.
- Lewis, A. C. & Sherman, S. J. (2010). Perceived entitativity and the black-sheep effect: When will we denigrate negative ingroup members? *Journal of Social Psychology*, 150, 211-215.
- Lickel, B., Hamilton, D. L., Wierzchowska, G., Lewis, A., Sherman, S. J., & Uhles, A. N. (2000). Varieties of groups and the perception of

- group entitativity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 223-246.
- Martinez-Herrera, E. (2002). From nation-building to building identification with political communities: Consequences of political decentralisation in Spain, the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia, 1978-2001. *European Journal of Political Research*, 41, 421-453.
- Mitchell, G. (2012). Revisiting truth or triviality: The external validity of research in the psychological laboratory. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7, 109-117.
- Mohamed, B. & O'Brien, J. (2011). Ground Zero of misunderstanding. *Contexts*, 10, 62-64.
- Mummendey, A., Kessler, T., Klink, A., & Mielke, R. (1999). Strategies to cope with negative social identity: Predictions by social identity theory and relative deprivation theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 229-249.
- National Trust for Historic Preservation (2011). Prentice Women's Hospital. *Eleven most endangered historic places*. Retrieved February 20, 2012 from <http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/sites/midwest-region/prentice-womens-hospital.html>.
- Panosian, R. (2002). The past as nation: Three dimensions of Armenian identity. *Geopolitics*, 7, 121-146.
- Petigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 751-783.
- Pickett, C. L., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). The social monitoring system: Enhanced sensitivity to social cues as an adaptive response to social exclusion. In K. Williams, J. Forgas, and W. von Hippel (Eds.), *The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Pitman, T. S. & Ziegler, K. S. (2007). Basic human needs. In A. W. Kruglanski & E. T. Higgins (Eds.) *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 473-489). New York: Guilford Press.
- Pruitt, D. G. (2001). Achieving integrative agreements. In I. G. Asherman & S. V. Asherman (Eds.), *The negotiation sourcebook* (pp.187-196). Human Resource Development Press: New York.
- Roccas, S., Sagiv, L., Schwartz, S. H., Halevy, N., & Eidelson, R. (2008). Toward a unifying model of identification with groups: Integrating theoretical perspectives. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 12, 280-306.

- Rothman, J. & Olson, M.L. (2001). From interests to identities: Towards a new emphasis in interactive conflict resolution. *Journal of Peace Research*, 38, 289-305
- Saad, L. (2011, September 2). Americans' fear of terrorism in U.S. is near low point. *Gallup News*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/149315/americans-fear-terrorism-near-low-point.aspx>.
- Sherif, M., & Sherif, C. W. (1953). *Groups in harmony and tension; an integration of studies on intergroup relations*. New York: Harper.
- Sherman, S. J., Hamilton, D. L., & Lewis, A. C. (1999). Perceived entitativity and the social identity value of group memberships. In D. Abrams & M. Hogg (Eds.) *Social identity and social cognition* (pp. 80-110). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & L. W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 276-293). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223, 96-102
- Wicklund, R. A., & Gollwitzer, P. M. (1981). Symbolic self-completion, attempted influence, and self-deprecation. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 2, 89-114.