THE PRICE OF A SHARED VISION: GROUP IDENTITY GOALS AND THE SOCIAL CREATION OF VALUE

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Drawing on theories of shared reality, symbolic self-completion, and social identity, we suggest that group identity can be considered a goal toward which group members strive by seeking out socially recognized identity symbols, such as property that relates to group history. Three studies build on past research to suggest that when group identity goals are strong, people strive to ensure social recognition of a group's identity symbols, and place greater value on means that are effective at communicating group identity to other people. In Study 1, group members' commitment to an identity goal predicted their desire to publicize a property's relationship to group identity. In Studies 2 and 3, individual and situational variations in goal strength increased the value placed on property (a potential means) only when the property's symbolic significance was socially recognized. Implications for shared reality and conflict resolution are discussed.

What drives the value people place on group-owned property? Although researchers have examined a number of psychological processes that influence the way individuals value personal possessions (e.g., Beggan, 1992; Belk, 1988; Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1990; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008), less research has addressed the importance of the group context for understanding the perceived value of group possessions. Yet this issue is clearly an important one, perhaps most obviously because of the key role played by group-related land and other forms of property in conflict situations. Towns can be divided over the preservation of a historical landmark, and siblings often fight over family heirlooms handed down through generations. At the international level, conflicts around the globe and throughout

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history have centered on land and other forms of property, including Jerusalem, Kashmir, and Kosovo. What drives people to value property so highly that they will often go to such extreme lengths for the chance that their group might secure it? At a more basic level, how might the group identity processes inherent in such settings influence the value placed on property?

To address this issue, Ledgerwood, Liviatan, and Carnevale (2007) developed a group identity completion perspective on why property is valued in group contexts. This perspective suggests that group identity can be conceptualized as a goal toward which group members strive by seeking out socially recognized symbols of group identity. Because group property is often related to a group's history and identity, it can provide a means by which such group identity motivations can be pursued. Accordingly, when group identity goals are highly activated, group members should attach greater value to property and other potential symbols of group identity that help to communicate the defining features of that group identity to others. Of particular relevance to this special issue, only symbols that are *socially recognized* as relating to group identity can serve this communicatory function.

To understand the logic behind our theoretical perspective, it is useful to review the literatures upon which it is based, including theories of social identity and symbolic self-completion. We begin by briefly reviewing these fields and how they relate to the present framework, before turning our attention to focus explicitly on the importance of shared reality.

A key tenet of the present perspective is the notion that group members want their group to possess a certain set of characteristics and attributes that comprise a *desired group identity*, or group identity goal.[1] This motivational approach to understanding group identity processes has longstanding roots in the literature. For instance, according to social identity theory, group members are motivated to maximize the positive distinctiveness of their own group compared to others in order to serve basic self-esteem needs (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Building on this notion, others have stressed additional motivations that underlie group identity. Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory has argued that people identify with groups to the extent that they can provide an optimal balance between inclusiveness and distinctiveness motives. In addition, Hogg and colleagues have proposed an uncertainty-reduction model suggesting that group identity serves to reduce uncertainty about how one should feel and behave (Hogg, 2007; Hogg & Abrams, 1993). Individuals may thus be motivated to define their group in certain ways in order to fulfill needs for self-esteem, optimal distinctiveness, and/or epistemic clarity.

Drawing on this notion of identity as a desired end-state, the current perspective seeks to shed light on how people go about pursuing a desired group identity. Although numerous studies have documented the effects of group-defining motives on outcomes such as stereotyping, intergroup bias, conformity, and cohesion (e.g., Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993; see Hogg & Abrams, 2003, for a review), less research

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1. It is worth distinguishing the notion of a *desired* group identity (in the sense of a collection of attributes that people want their group to have) and a positive group identity (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; cf. Swann, 1990). Group members may want to establish that their group possesses not just positive, group-enhancing attributes, but also neutral or even negative attributes (see also Hogg & Abrams, 1993; Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007).

has focused on the volitional *processes* involved in implementing a group identity goal. Our framework builds on symbolic self-completion theory to explain how people pursue a desired group identity, and the role that property may play in such a process.

According to symbolic self-completion theory (Gollwitzer, 1986; Gollwitzer & Kirchhof, 1998; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981), personal identities (e.g., doctor, teacher, religious person) can be conceptualized as goals or desired end-states, toward which individuals strive by seeking out or emphasizing their possession of the defining features of the identity in question. More specifically, when pursuing such a goal, individuals use socially recognized symbols (e.g., an occupational position, publicly recognized task performance, or material possessions) of their personal identity in order to communicate that identity to other people. For example, a doctor might strive to attain or emphasize all the possible indicators of "being a doctor"—including a medical degree, a white coat, and an office with her name on a plaque outside the door.

Drawing a parallel to the group level, we have suggested that group identity, like personal identity, can be considered a goal toward which group members strive by seeking out symbols that can represent or communicate aspects of group identity to other people (Ledgerwood et al., 2007). In this framework, the goal—or desired end-state—is for the group to attain a desired group identity, and this is accomplished by possessing all possible indicators, or symbols, of the identity in question. Of course, since it is unlikely that a group could ever possess every single possible symbol of group identity, it is difficult to attain (or "complete") a group identity goal in any permanent sense (see also Gollwitzer & Kirchhof, 1998). Thus, group members can easily encounter situations that highlight a lack of group identity completeness. In such situations, they are motivated to strive to regain a sense of (at least temporary) completeness by seeking out symbols and attributes of the desired group identity.

What our perspective suggests, then, is that symbols and other attributes of group identity function as the *means* by which a group identity goal is pursued. Property may be a particularly important means in this context because it provides an especially stable and tangible symbol of group identity. Property persists across generations, it can be touched and seen, and it can be owned. These factors may make it easier to express group identity to others and transmit a shared understanding of the group across generations (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). Property should therefore serve as a particularly good means by which a group identity goal can be pursued.

The benefit of conceptualizing group identity within such a goals framework is that it suggests specific predictions about how the value placed on property in group-related contexts will change depending on aspects of the means-ends relationship. Previous research on self-regulation has demonstrated that during goal pursuit, objects conducive to goal attainment are evaluated and valued more positively (e.g., Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Förster, Liberman, & Friedman, 2007; see also Higgins, 2006). This facilitates the approach of effective means and promotes goal-consistent action, which in turn helps people successfully reach their goals. Thus, the value placed on a potential means for a goal tends to reflect (a) the importance or strength of a goal (its "value," in classic terminology), and (b) the expectancy that the means can effectively serve that goal (see e.g., Atkinson, 1964; Feather & Newton, 1982; Kruglanski et al., 2002).

We can extend this reasoning to our current perspective. If we view group identity completion as a goal and property as a potential means by which to pursue that goal, it suggests that the value placed on property should depend on (a) individual or situational variations in the strength of a group identity completion goal, and (b) variations in the quality of the means (i.e., the extent to which the property serves as a good or effective symbol of group identity). Indeed, support for these predictions was obtained in a series of studies conducted in the U.S. and Israel (Ledgerwood et al., 2007). For example, group members valued a building linked to their group's history more when they were strongly committed to a group identity goal, or after a discrepancy between actual and desired group identity had been highlighted (vs. minimized). Thus, the value placed on potential symbols of group identity appears to reflect the strength of group identity goal pursuit for a given person in a given context. In addition, when a group identity goal was activated, property was valued more highly when it was related (vs. unrelated) to ingroup history and could therefore effectively symbolize group identity, consistent with the notion that the quality of the means also impacts value when an identity goal is being pursued.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARED REALITY

The research summarized above supports the idea that the perceived value of group-owned property is sensitive to variations in means-ends relations. However, there is an important aspect of group identity completion to which we have alluded but not yet fully explored: Our perspective suggests that group members strive toward group identity completion by seeking out symbols that can communicate aspects of group identity *to other people*.[2] We turn now to clarify why this should be so from a theoretical perspective, and then to test empirically whether social sharing in fact plays a role in the volitional processes described above.

According to shared reality theory, individuals are motivated by broad epistemic and relational concerns to achieve and maintain shared understandings of various objects in their social world with other people (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, & Hardin, 2005). Such shared understandings are important because social recognition or validation serves to make subjective experience seem factual, real, and objective (Festinger, 1954; Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; James, 1907; Sherif, 1935). As William James suggested, notions of truth depend entirely on social validation: "Beliefs verified concretely by *somebody* are the posts of the whole superstructure" (James, 1907, p. 208). In other words, to be perceived as true, a belief must be shared with others. In turn, this both allows us to perceive ourselves

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2. Although one can distinguish the communication of information from the sharing of a belief (see Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009), in this article we assume that information communication is often an important prerequisite for belief sharing. In order for someone to feel that an audience shares his subjective understanding of his group identity, he must first find a way to communicate aspects of the group identity to the audience (see also Footnotes 3 and 4). The present research suggests that group members pursue a group identity goal by seeking out symbols that are likely to be socially recognized because they communicate an aspect of group identity to others (thereby fulfilling this key prerequisite to belief sharing). We use the term "socially recognized symbols" to refer to symbols that people subjectively believe are or are likely to be recognized by others.

as well as the environment as predictable and controllable (fulfilling epistemic needs for understanding and certainty) and provides a critical foundation for social relationships (thereby fulfilling affiliative needs as well; see Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2008).

The notion that social validation plays an important role in group identity processes dates back to Festinger's (1950) suggestion that individuals use social groups to test the subjective validity of their beliefs, and is reflected to some extent in Schachter's (1959) observation that people are motivated to affiliate with others in order to reduce uncertainty about subjective emotional experiences and context-appropriate behaviors. Furthermore, a person's identity as a group member may itself need social verification, as evidenced by research on identity-related processes. For example, the social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE model) suggests that individuals perform identity-relevant behaviors to "consolidate" (i.e., confirm and clarify) their group membership to ingroup and/or outgroup members (Klein et al., 2007). In one study, participants adjusted their publicly expressed prejudice to fit the normative attitudes of an important ingroup, in order to communicate their possession of this identity-relevant characteristic to others (Klein, Licata, Azzi, & Durala, 2003). Similarly, researchers have suggested that group members want other people to verify aspects of their collective self (i.e., group-typical attributes they believe they possess; Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004). Individuals also use material symbols, such as a particular article of clothing, to "signal" their group membership to others (e.g., Berger & Heath, 2008; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981). Together, this research suggests that individuals seek to validate their sense of themselves as group members by acting in ways and seeking out audiences that can confirm their group membership.

The present perspective likewise draws on the importance of social validation in transforming subjective beliefs into objective reality in the context of social groups. Importantly, whereas past research has primarily focused on how individuals communicate attributes of their identity as a group member through their own personal behaviors and material possessions, we draw a parallel to the group level to examine how group members convey aspects of the *group* identity to others via *group*-owned symbols (Ledgerwood et al., 2007; see Klein et al., 2007, p. 31, for a similar distinction). This shift in focus from the individual to group level represents an important distinction between our work and previous studies looking at shared reality and social identity. Here, we test whether the value that group members assign to a property is contingent upon its capacity to promote a shared understanding of their group's identity.

If beliefs about the world in general, and about one's group identity in particular, must be socially shared in order to be perceived as valid and true (e.g., Festinger, 1954; Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Klein et al., 2007), then the goal for group identity completion must involve not only the desire for one's group to possess all possible indicators of group identity, but also the desire to *share* the belief that one's group possesses all of these indicators. From a shared reality perspective, it is pointless to pursue a group completion goal if others will not ultimately recognize that the identity goal has been attained (see also Gollwitzer, 1986; Mahler, 1933, as cited in Gollwitzer & Kirchoff, 1998). In other words, the belief that one's group possesses a desired set of characteristics is not sufficient in and of itself to create a sense of group identity completeness. To become a social fact, others must share this belief.

At the same time, in order to make progress toward the completion of a socially shared group identity, it is necessary for the group to accumulate symbols that are each capable of communicating aspects of group identity to other people. In other words, for a symbol to be perceived as an effective means in group identity goal pursuit, a person must believe it is likely to be socially recognized as signifying group identity. Thus, the quality of a potential means for group identity completion should depend not simply on whether a person privately believes a symbol relates to group identity, but also on whether others are likely to share this belief. Only symbols that help indicate the possession of a particular group identity to others can serve as effective means for group identity completion.[3]

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

In the current research, we seek to show that social validation is in fact critical to the pursuit of a group identity completion goal. In order to translate group identity from one's subjective and unsure individual experience to objective and certain fact, it is essential to accumulate symbols that are recognized by others as representing group identity and history. A number of empirical predictions follow from this perspective. Most obviously, if our reasoning above is correct, then group members should be concerned about whether an identity symbol is socially shared. Thus, commitment to a group identity goal should predict not only the value placed on a potential symbol of that group identity (Ledgerwood et al., 2007, Study 1), but also the desire to devote group effort and resources to promoting *social recognition* of the group identity symbol. In other words, group identity goal pursuit should lead group members not only to seek out possible indicators of group identity, but also to ensure that beliefs about the meaning of these indicators (i.e., the identity-related nature of a potential symbol) are shared with an audience (see also Gollwitzer, 1986). As a simple and straightforward initial test of the importance of shared reality to our theoretical framework, Study 1 examined whether individual differences in commitment to a New York University (NYU) identity goal would predict NYU students' desire for the group to publicize evidence linking a potential identity symbol to the ingroup's history. We expected that greater goal commitment would predict an increased desire for publicizing, in an effort to create a socially shared belief about the significance of the symbol.

Furthermore, if group identity goals are geared toward establishing a shared understanding of group identity with other people, then group identity symbols such as property should *only* be valued as effective means by which to pursue such goals when their relevance to group identity is likely to be socially recognized. When others do not seem to share the belief that an object symbolizes one's group identity, it cannot function as a means by which to communicate this identity to others, and should therefore accrue no additional value from group identity goal

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3. It may be useful to note that we have described two kinds of *targets* of shared reality (i.e., the object about which people want to achieve a shared understanding). The first, broad target is the desired end-state itself: People want others to recognize that their group possesses a collection of characteristics and attributes. However, making progress toward this goal involves accumulating a set of indicators that can symbolize group identity to others. Thus, the symbolic significance of *each indicator* becomes itself a *specific* target of shared reality. We return to this distinction in the General Discussion.

pursuit. Although Ledgerwood et al. (2007) demonstrated that group identity goal commitment and situational manipulations of goal strength influence the value placed on property, they did not examine whether these effects were moderated by whether the property's symbolic potential was likely to be socially recognized. Studies 2 and 3 tested this theoretically crucial claim by manipulating the expected social recognition of a property's relationship to group identity, in order to determine whether this would moderate the extent to which individual and situational differences in group identity goal pursuit predict the value placed on the property.

Our perspethve suggests that factors that strengthen group identity goal pursuit should increase the value placed on potentially effective (vs. ineffective) means, and that only socially recognized symbols should be considered effective for group identity goal completion. We therefore hypothesized that the perceived value of property would *only* reflect a group member's chronic goal commitment (Study 2) or situationally induced goal striving (Study 3) when its symbolic potential was likely to be socially recognized.

STUDY 1

As a preliminary test of our theoretical perspective, we conducted a correlational study to determine whether group identity goal commitment and the desire to promote shared recognition of a property's symbolic potential would be positively related. NYU students first completed a measure of commitment to NYU identity, and later filled out an ostensibly unrelated survey about a building related to NYU history. As a measure of the desire for social recognition, we asked participants to report the extent to which they wanted to devote group effort and resources toward publicizing the link between the building and NYU history.[4] We reasoned that if successful pursuit of a group identity goal requires ensuring that a group identity symbol is socially recognized, then there should be a positive correlation between goal commitment and desire for social recognition. On the other hand, failing to find a positive correlation would be consistent with the notion that a personal belief in the property's symbolic significance can still make it a good means by which to satisfy a group identity goal (in fact, in this case one might even expect a negative correlation, if expending group effort on such an endeavor is seen as a waste of limited group resources).

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4. Of course, publicizing a link between a building and the group's history does not always ensure the establishment of shared reality, and might sometimes even create a lack of it (e.g., if the publicity led to controversy over the validity of the information). In other words, we must distinguish theoretically between shared knowledge or information and shared beliefs. However, in the current context, publicizing the history of the townhouse represents the most straightforward and obvious way to obtain social recognition of the building's symbolic significance (and indeed, shared information about the townhouse's history is a necessary precursor of shared beliefs about its history). Furthermore, there was no reason to expect our participants to question whether publicizing the information would increase the likelihood of social recognition in this context (the information did not appear to be potentially controversial). We therefore expected that insofar as the completion of group identity goals requires social sharing, participants who were highly committed to NYU identity goals would be more inclined to publicize the link between the building and NYU history.

METHOD

Thirty-five NYU undergraduates (27 female, 7 male, and 1 unreported) completed a series of unrelated surveys in partial fulfillment of a course requirement. The two measures of interest were embedded within these surveys, and separated by a neutral filler task.

Group Identity Goal Commitment. Participants completed a survey entitled "All About You" that asked them to rate the extent to which they felt a number of different identities, attributes, and activities were important to them (e.g., gender identity, fairness, the upcoming political election) on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Extremely*). Embedded within the list of 16 questions were four items designed to measure commitment to an NYU identity goal (e.g., "How committed are you to your NYU identity?" and reverse-coded "How detached do you feel from your NYU identity?" See Appendix A for a full list of items). Responses were averaged to form an index of group identity goal commitment ($\alpha = .84$).

Group Identity Symbol. After completing an unrelated anagram task for several minutes, participants received a survey modeled after Ledgerwood et al. (2007). The survey pictured a townhouse located in a nearby neighborhood in Manhattan, and described its relation to NYU's history. According to the description, "recent renovations revealed that Albert Gallatin, one of the central founders of New York University, lived in this townhouse at the time NYU was founded." The survey went on to suggest that "This discovery has so far received very little press, so although there have been rumors about this building's place in NYU history for some time, few people really believe that the townhouse has anything to do with NYU's history." Thus, participants learned that although the building was linked to their group's identity, this link was not socially shared.

Desire for Social Recognition. Participants were told that NYU student opinions were being solicited to help inform upcoming decisions that NYU would make concerning the townhouse. We measured desire for social recognition in two different ways to capture multiple aspects of goal-striving behavior. First, participants were asked to indicate the amount of effort they thought NYU should put into communicating the link between the building and NYU history to others by responding to three items (e.g., "How hard do you think NYU should try to raise awareness about the evidence linking NYU history and the townhouse;" see Appendix B) on a scale from 1 (*Not at all*) to 9 (*Extremely*). These items were averaged to form a measure of desired group effort ($\alpha = .88$).

Second, we measured the extent to which group members thought their group should devote resources to communicating the link between the property and their group's history. Participants were told that NYU could contribute up to 100% of a budget allocated for news release purposes to publicizing the evidence linking NYU history and the townhouse. They were asked to indicate what percentage of the budget NYU should devote to this purpose on a scale from 0 to 100%.

To probe for suspicion, participants in this study and subsequent studies were asked "Is there anything else you think we should know?" after completing the townhouse survey, followed by a full funnel debriefing at the end of the study session (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two participants were suspicious and stated they thought the property scenario was fake. Analyses were conducted on the remaining 33 participants.

As predicted, commitment to a group identity goal was positively correlated with both desired group effort, $r(32) = .58$, $p < .001$,[5] and recommended group resources, $r(33) = .44$, $p = .01$. In other words, participants who were more highly committed to an NYU identity goal wanted NYU to devote more effort and a greater percentage of resources toward promoting social recognition of an NYU identity symbol.

Of course, when considered alone, the correlational nature of this study cautions against definitive conclusions. Indeed, one might argue that participants who were more highly committed to their group identity were simply more motivated to promote a positive image of their group, presumably because this would enhance their personal or collective self-esteem. It should be noted, however, that the historical significance of the building was designed to be neutral rather than positive (i.e., a person involved in NYU's history happened to live there, rather than the building being associated with an NYU sports victory or a celebrity author who might reflect favorably on the school), which renders this alternative account less plausible. At the very least, then, the results provide intriguing initial support for the notion that group identity goals are rooted in shared reality concerns. Specifically, pursuing these goals may motivate people not only to seek out potential group identity symbols, but also to ensure that others share the belief that the symbol reflects group identity.

STUDY 2

Our next two studies manipulated social recognition as an independent variable, rather than measuring it as an outcome, in order to test whether it would moderate the relationship between goal strength and value that has been demonstrated in previous research (Ledgerwood et al., 2007). Based on these past studies, we know that the value placed on potential symbols of group identity varies depending on personal and situational factors that influence the strength of a group identity completion goal. However, goal strength should only influence the value placed on means that are potentially effective for pursuing a group identity completion goal. If symbols only constitute effective means insofar as they communicate group identity to others, then goal strength should influence perceived value only when others are likely to share the belief that a symbol relates to group identity.

Study 2 tested this prediction by focusing on individual differences in the strength of a group identity completion goal. Participants again reported their commitment to an NYU identity goal, and later read about a townhouse related to NYU history. Whereas half the participants learned that the link between the building and NYU history was likely to be widely recognized, half learned that few people believed the building was related to NYU history. We then measured

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5. Degrees of freedom differ due to missing data for one participant.

how valuable participants perceived the townhouse to be. Based on our theoretical framework, we hypothesized that group identity goal commitment would only predict value when the building's symbolic potential (i.e., its relationship to NYU history) was expected to be socially recognized.

METHOD

Twenty-nine NYU students (22 female, 7 male) participated for course credit. The procedure was the same as in Study 1, except for the changes described below. The materials were again embedded within part of a larger set of unrelated surveys, and separated by a neutral filler task.

Group Identity Goal Commitment. Participants completed the measure of NYU identity goal commitment used in Study 1 (α = .81).

Social Recognition. A passage was added to the description of the townhouse in order to manipulate whether the link between the townhouse and NYU history was seen as socially shared. Thus, half the participants read that "the link between NYU history and the townhouse is likely to remain unknown" (socially unshared condition) and half read that "the link between NYU history and the townhouse is likely to be widely acknowledged" (socially shared condition).

Value. In order to assess the value participants placed on the townhouse, we used a typical economic measure of value adapted by Ledgerwood et al. (2007). Participants were given a list of possible transaction prices for the sale of the building ranging from $1 million to $15 million, and asked to indicate whether they thought NYU should be willing to sell the building at each price. Participants believed that this transaction would actually occur and were told that their opinions would help inform the group's decisions. The perceived value of the building was measured as the price at which participants thought NYU should sell the building (see Kahneman et al., 1990, Studies 1-2). This was calculated as the point halfway between the highest price at which participants indicated they did not want NYU to sell and the lowest price at which participants indicated that NYU should be willing to sell (thus for example, a person who said NYU should not sell at 8 million but should at 9 million was assumed to value the townhouse at $8.5 million).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We expected that group identity goal commitment would differentially predict value placed on a group identity symbol depending on whether the symbolic nature of the property was likely to be socially shared. In order to test this hypothesis, we first centered group identity goal commitment at the mean (*M* = 4.45), and computed an interaction term between group identity goal commitment (centered) and social recognition. We then regressed our measure of value on group identity goal commitment (centered), social recognition (dummy-coded), and the interaction between the two.

The results of the regression are reported in Table 1. As expected, the interaction between group identity goal commitment and social recognition was significant,

TABLE 1. Regression Coefficients Predicting Perceived Value in Millions of Dollars in Study 2

Predictor	B	SE	t
Intercept	10.57	.89	11.90**
Goal commitment	-.44	.82	.53
Social recognition	-.52	1.28	.40
Commitment x Recognition	2.55	1.15	2.22*

Note. $R^2 = .22$. *$p < .01$, **$p < .001$.

$t(25) = 2.22$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 1). Tests of the simple slopes revealed that group identity goal commitment only predicted value when the link between the townhouse and NYU history was socially shared, $B = 2.11$, $t(12) = 2.49$, $p < .05$. When the link was not socially recognized, goal commitment was unrelated to the perceived value of the townhouse, $B = -.44$, $t < 1$.[6] Thus, consistent with our theoretical framework, the expectation of a shared belief in the symbolic nature of the townhouse was necessary for a relationship between group identity goal commitment and value to emerge. This suggests that property may only be valued as an effective means by which a group identity goal can be completed when its symbolic potential is socially recognized.

STUDY 3

In the final study, we sought to provide a conceptual replication of our Study 2 results, as well as reinforce our motivational account, by using a standard situational manipulation of goal pursuit. Participants read a passage designed to either activate or subdue group identity goal striving by creating a sense of identity incompleteness or completeness. This was accomplished by augmenting or minimizing the perceived discrepancy between the actual set of characteristics possessed by NYU and the desired set of characteristics (Ledgerwood et al., 2007; see also Carver & Scheier, 1998; Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996; Higgins, 1987). Participants later reported the perceived value of a townhouse whose relationship to NYU history was either socially recognized or unrecognized. We predicted that insofar as social recognition affects the perceived quality of a means for group identity goal completion, NYU identity discrepancy would increase the perceived value of the building only when its symbolic potential was expected to be socially shared.

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6. These results are reported after the removal of an extreme value, which was exerting a disproportionate amount of influence on the results: One participant reported an unusually low level of commitment to an NYU identity goal (1.50, almost at the bottom of the scale). This extreme value exerted an inordinately high level of influence on the regression equation predicting value, DFFIT > 3, $DFBETA_{interaction} > 1$ (see Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Unsurprisingly then, including the influence point in the regression altered the interaction term, $B = 1.35$, $t(26) = 1.14$, $p = .26$. Tests of the simple slopes revealed that the overall pattern of results remained similar: Goal commitment predicted value when the link between the building and NYU history was socially shared, $B = 2.11$, $t(12) = 2.49$, $p < .05$, but not when the link was unrecognized, $B = .77$, $t < 1$.
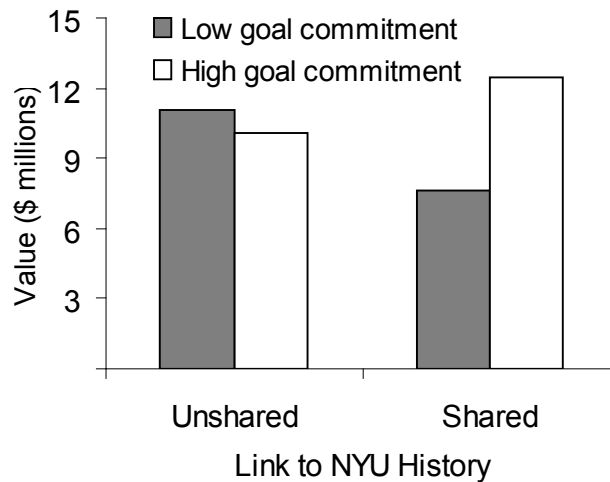
FIGURE 1. Perceived value of the townhouse as a function of social recognition for those low vs. high in goal commitment (graphed at one standard deviation above and below the mean).

METHOD

Sixty NYU undergraduates (40 female, 19 male, and 1 unreported) participated in partial fulfillment of a course requirement. They were randomly assigned to one cell in a 2 (social recognition: shared vs. unshared) x 2 (group identity discrepancy: high vs. low) factorial design.

The procedure was based closely on Ledgerwood et al. (2007, Study 3). Participants completed two ostensibly unrelated surveys as part of a series of questionnaires from various researchers. The first survey manipulated the perceived magnitude of group identity discrepancy, and the second manipulated social recognition and measured the perceived value of the townhouse, as described below.

Group Identity Discrepancy. Participants received a questionnaire that introduced a new online newsletter for New York City high school and college students called Village Online. They learned that the creators of the newsletter wanted to ensure that the newsletter would cover issues that were interesting to students, and so were asking students around the city to read a few pilot articles and give their feedback. Participants then saw two brief pilot columns. To maintain the credibility of the cover story, participants were asked several questions after each pilot column about how interesting and well written they considered the article to be. In addition, the first column was designed to be unrelated to NYU identity (to distract from the real purpose of the experiment) but still plausibly of interest to the newsletter readership; it discussed the fact that the provost of another New York City university (New School) was considering running for City Hall.

The second column contained the manipulation of group identity discrepancy. Participants in the high discrepancy condition saw a column entitled "NYU on the Decline," which described NYU's reputation as faltering and its quality declining over the last ten years. Participants in the low discrepancy condition instead saw

a column entitled "NYU on the Rise," which suggested that NYU's reputation had been climbing and its quality increasing. Past research has shown that augmenting group identity discrepancy increases the value placed on a group identity symbol relative to a neutral control condition, while minimizing group identity discrepancy decreases perceived value relative to controls; furthermore, similar manipulations directed at the self did not have the same effect (suggesting that the effects of the group identity discrepancy manipulation were not due to a general response to threat or a need to maintain self-esteem; Ledgerwood et al., 2007, Study 4). Thus in this study, only the key identity discrepancy conditions of interest were used.

   Social Recognition and Perceived Value. Last, participants received the same townhouse survey used in Study 2, which manipulated whether the link between the building and NYU history was socially shared and then measured perceived value of the townhouse in millions of dollars.

RESULTS

A 2 (social recognition: shared vs. unshared) x 2 (group identity discrepancy: high vs. low) between-subjects ANOVA with perceived value as the dependent variable yielded a main effect for social recognition, $F(1, 56) = 4.24$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, such that overall, perceived value was higher when the link between the building and NYU history was socially recognized ($M = 12.18$) versus unrecognized ($M = 10.81$). There was no main effect for group identity discrepancy, $F < 1$. Importantly, the predicted interaction emerged between social recognition and identity discrepancy, $F(1, 56) = 5.49$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. As can be seen in Figure 2, leading participants to perceive a high (vs. low) discrepancy between actual and desired group identity increased the value placed on the townhouse only when the link between the building and NYU history was socially recognized, $F(1, 56) = 4.15$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. When the link was not socially recognized, augmenting rather than minimizing identity discrepancy did not affect value, $F < 1.6$ (in fact, the trend was if anything in the opposite direction). Thus, as in Study 2, perceived value only reflected variations in group identity goal strength when the symbolic significance of the property was likely to be socially shared. These results therefore provide additional support for the notion that shared reality plays a key role in group identity goal pursuit, suggesting that only symbols with the potential to communicate group identity are valued as effective means when group identity goals are activated.

   It could be argued that participants might have inferred something about the value of the townhouse from how well publicized its history had been. However, if this were the case, then they should have valued the building more highly when the link was recognized (vs. unrecognized), regardless of discrepancy condition. Importantly, however, social recognition had no effect on value in the low discrepancy condition, $F < 1$, suggesting that participants were not simply basing their value estimates on information about publicity. Rather, social recognition only mattered when group identity goals were activated, consistent with the notion that socially recognized identity symbols provide a means by which these goals are pursued.

   It is also interesting to note that for participants who thought that the link between the townhouse and NYU history was not socially recognized, high group
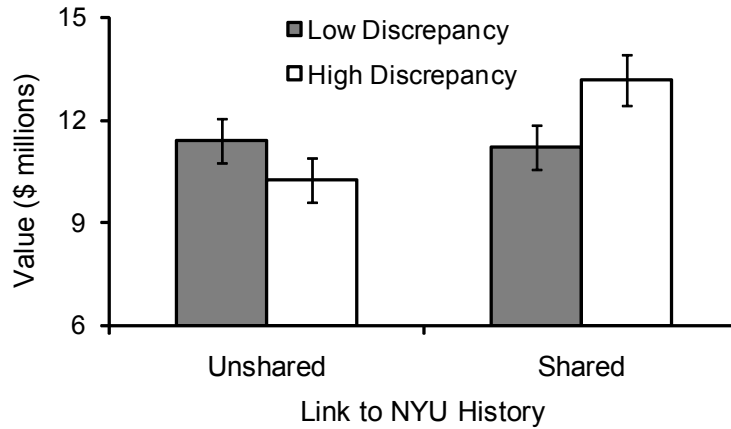
FIGURE 2. Perceived value of the townhouse as a function of social recognition and group identity discrepancy in Study 3. Error bars indicate one standard error above and below the mean.

identity discrepancy actually seemed to decrease the value placed on the building relative to the low discrepancy condition, although this difference was not significant. Still, the trend seems potentially worthy of future study: It may be that activating a group identity goal by highlighting a discrepancy between actual and desired group identity leads people not only to place greater value on good means of pursuing the group identity goal, but also to devalue poor means. In the present context, when the link between the building and NYU history is expected to be socially shared, the townhouse provides a good means of symbolizing group identity to others, and is valued accordingly. However, when the link is not socially recognized, the townhouse is incapable of symbolizing group identity to others, because other people do not share the belief that the building relates to NYU history and identity. This notion is compatible with research on self-regulation suggesting that objects conducive to goal attainment are evaluated based on how useful they are for a given focal goal (e.g., Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Förster et al., 2007). Consequently, objects disruptive to goal attainment are evaluated more negatively and tend to be avoided (e.g., Fishbach & Shah, 2006; Mischel, Ebbeson, & Zeiss, 1972; Shah, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2002). Thus, it seems plausible that in this case, the activation of a group identity goal might lead people to devalue property when its link to group identity is not socially shared, because socially unrecognized symbols cannot promote group identity goal completion (and any resources devoted to acquiring them cannot be used to pursue more effective means).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The theoretical perspective proposed here posits that group identity can be fruitfully conceptualized within a goals framework as representing the set of attributes and characteristics that group members want their group to possess. Furthermore, we suggested that group members pursue this goal by seeking out potential symbols of the desired group identity, and also by ensuring that others share their

belief in the symbolic significance of these objects. Importantly, the present studies provide the first empirical support for the importance of shared reality in group identity goal pursuit.

In Study 1, group members' commitment to an NYU identity goal predicted their desire for social recognition of a group identity symbol, as measured by the extent to which they wanted the group to devote effort and resources to publicizing the identity-related history of an NYU townhouse. Studies 2 and 3 demonstrated that individual and situational factors that influence the strength of a group identity goal only affected the value placed on property when the property's relationship to group identity was socially sharable. Specifically, in Study 2, commitment to an NYU identity goal predicted the value placed on property linked to NYU history when the belief in this link was likely to be socially recognized, but not when it was unlikely to be recognized. In Study 3, augmenting (vs. minimizing) the discrepancy between desired and actual group identity increased the perceived value of an NYU property only when participants expected others to share the belief that the property was related to NYU history. Thus, consistent with the notion that social recognition is essential for a means to be perceived as effective in group identity goal completion, property was only valued as a means for pursuing this goal when the belief in its symbolic nature was socially sharable.

It is important to delineate the relationship between the specific target of social sharing examined in our studies (i.e., the symbolic significance of the NYU building) to the more general target of social sharing (i.e., a desired group identity) that we have suggested motivates these processes. The basic tenet of the current perspective is that group members want their group to possess a certain set of attributes that define their group's identity. Because the attainment of an identity goal cannot seem real unless it is socially shared, group members are motivated to establish a shared reality about the desired group identity. Thus, the ultimate goal of group identity completion processes is for the desired group identity as a whole to be socially recognized. However, the *pursuit* of this goal requires accumulating relevant indicators that can each communicate some aspect of the desired group identity. The symbolic quality of these indicators must therefore be socially recognized for them to serve their function as communicators of group identity. Hence, in the process of group identity goal pursuit, the belief that a given indicator actually relates to group identity becomes a specific target of shared reality.

Thus, in striving to attain shared reality about group identity as a whole, people seek out shared reality about specific indicators. This has important consequences: The capacity of an indicator to be socially shared determines its quality as *means* for the attainment of these goals. Accordingly, symbols that are effective means for promoting social verification of group identity completion should be highly valued compared to symbols that are less likely to serve this goal. Supporting these ideas, our results suggest that a building that is likely (vs. unlikely) to be shared in this sense is a preferred means for group identity goal completion, as evidenced by its enhanced value.

GROUP IDENTITY AS A GOAL

Taken together, the results of our studies complement and extend motivational perspectives on group identity (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Hogg & Abrams, 1993; Tajfel

& Turner, 1979) to shed light on the volitional processes by which group identity goals are pursued. Conceptualizing group identity within a goals framework also helps bring together the group identity and self-regulation literatures, which have thus far remained largely disconnected. Our findings highlight the potential utility of bridging between these fields to better understand processes underlying the fulfillment of identity goals. For example, Study 1 provided suggestive evidence that identity variables related to goal strength predict classic consequences of goal pursuit (e.g., increased effort). Likewise, Study 2 drew on self-regulatory research to further reinforce our goals perspective as well as the importance of social validation in group identity goal completion. Specifically, insofar as commitment to an NYU identity represents individual differences in the *value* of the group identity completion goal, and likelihood of social sharing reflects the *expectancy* to attain the goal, the results suggest that the townhouse's price was contingent upon the product of expectancy and value—one of the key properties of goal pursuit processes (e.g., Atkinson, 1964; Förster et al., 2007; Kruglanski et al., 2002; Locke & Latham, 1990; for a review, see Feather & Newton, 1982).

It is possible, however, to argue against a motivational interpretation of Study 2's findings. For example, it could be the case that commitment to group identity predicts the value placed on a shared symbol of group identity because both variables reflect the perceived importance or relevance of group identity for a given person (although note that this explanation must still acknowledge the importance of shared reality in moderating this relationship). However, in Study 3, we used a standard method of situationally manipulating a goal's value—introducing a discrepancy between desired and actual states (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996; Higgins, 1987, 2006; Lewin, 1951)—in order to conceptually replicate our findings from Study 2 and bolster our motivational account. As expected, the perceived value of the townhouse increased as a function of the value of the group identity goal and the expectancy of reaching it.

Finally, thinking about group identity within a goals framework suggests a number of novel predictions that future research could fruitfully explore. For example, it suggests that group identity symbols, like means, might be substitutable, so that emphasizing one might reduce the value placed on another (Gollwitzer & Kirchoff, 1998; Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996; Lewin, 1935). This idea could have important implications for understanding ways to reduce conflicts over property: By providing alternative means to pursue group identity completion goals (e.g., publicly recognizing important aspects of a group's identity; see also Gollwitzer, Sheeran, Michalski, & Seifert, 2009), the value of a group-owned property might be reduced, thereby increasing group members' willingness to compromise over the property in question. Predictions derived from goal systems theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002; Shah & Kruglanski, 2000) suggest additional hypotheses: For instance, symbols that can simultaneously serve multiple identity goals should be valued more highly than those serving only one identity goal.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SHARED REALITY THEORY AND RESEARCH

The present research joins a growing literature that highlights the importance of shared reality concerns for a wide range of psychological and behavioral phenomena (e.g., Echterhoff, Higgins, & Groll, 2005; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Jost et al.,

2008; Ledgerwood & Trope, 2010; Lowery, Hardin, & Sinclair, 2001; Sinclair, Hunt-singer, et al., 2005). According to shared reality theory, this importance stems from the fact that shared reality serves broad epistemic and relational needs across a variety of domains (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). This notion is compatible with a group identity completion perspective, as well. A person's individual beliefs about her group's attributes are uncertain and ephemeral; they therefore provide a poor basis upon which to draw conclusions or make predictions about the group and its members. When a shared understanding of the group's identity is achieved, it anchors a group member's understanding of the group in social fact (see also Hogg & Abrams, 1993; Klein et al., 2007; Tajfel, 1978). Validating one's group identity thus helps to fulfill epistemic and relational needs within the group context.

Interestingly, however, the present research suggests that the relational benefits of shared reality may at times be even broader than typically assumed. Specifically, shared reality theorists tend to focus on the motivation to achieve shared reality within a particular relationship, in order to support and strengthen that same relationship. For instance, research has demonstrated that individuals self-stereotype more when they are motivated to affiliate with another person who holds those stereotypical views (Sinclair, Hardin, & Lowery, 2006; Sinclair, Huntsinger, et al., 2005), presumably because establishing shared beliefs about the self with another person will facilitate one's relationship with that person. More broadly, shared reality theory posits that "relationships are established and maintained to the degree that shared reality is achieved and maintained among relationship participants" (Hardin & Conley, 2001, p. 9). Thus, establishing shared reality within a particular relationship is thought to directly benefit that same relationship.

However, a group identity completion perspective suggests that shared reality might also have indirect positive effects beyond the particular relationship in which it is achieved (see also Clark & Kashima, 2007). For instance, it seems quite possible that achieving a shared understanding of one's group with one person (or set of people) can have positive consequences for many different relationships, because it helps to anchor group identity in social fact. Attaining social recognition of a group identity symbol from one particular group member or even from someone outside the group helps to validate group identity and gives group members a concrete sense of what their group is like (and therefore, by extension, what other group members may be like). This set of beliefs and expectations, once translated into social fact, may then help to facilitate relationships with various other group members, at least insofar as these other group members hold similar beliefs and expectations.[7] In other words, one shared reality, once established, may help promote other shared realities and other relationships.

One particularly intriguing question deserving future research is the extent to which various sources of social recognition differentially affect group identity goal pursuit. In the present research, a broad and unspecified source of social recognition was sufficient to render property a useful means by which to pursue group identity completion. However, it is likely that sharing beliefs about one's group

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7. Thus, the extent to which this reasoning holds may depend on how widely shared or homogenous a set of beliefs about a given group happens to be. Future research should explore the extent to which sharing beliefs about group identity with one person facilitates or undermines the creation of shared reality with other group members.

identity with different audiences (e.g., other ingroup members vs. neutral out-group members vs. oppositional outgroup members) could at times differ sub-stantially in their consequences.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The present perspective also suggests that social recognition might provide a use-ful tool for promoting the peaceful resolution of longstanding intergroup con-flicts. Research on intergroup relations has demonstrated that intergroup biases can often be ameliorated by creating or emphasizing a superordinate identity—that is, a common or overarching group identity that encapsulates both ingroup and outgroup (e.g., Nier et al., 2001; see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2008, for a review). However, in some situations, it may prove difficult to make such new identities seem real and meaningful to group members entrenched in a longstanding, intrac-table conflict (Maye, 2005). Future research should examine whether the creation of new, superordinate identity symbols that are widely recognized by the interna-tional community could help to make a superordinate identity more meaningful to group members by anchoring it in a socially shared reality.

APPENDIX A. MEASURE OF GROUP IDENTITY GOAL COMMITMENT

1. How important to you is your NYU identity?
2. How committed are you to your NYU identity?
3. How detached do you feel from your NYU identity? (reverse-coded)
4. How much do you care about your NYU identity?

APPENDIX B. MEASURE OF DESIRED GROUP EFFORT

1. How important do you think it is to publicize the evidence linking NYU history and the townhouse?
2. How hard do you think NYU should try to raise awareness about the evidence linking NYU history and the townhouse?
3. How much effort should NYU's publicity office put into publicizing the evidence linking NYU history and the townhouse?

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