

MANAGING INTRACTABLE IDENTITY CONFLICTS

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Identity is often at the heart of ongoing intergroup conflicts in organizations. Drawing from theories of conflict management, social identity, and organizational identification, we develop the *intractable identity conflict resolution model*, which delineates a multiphase process by which the conflicting parties' identities shift in order to permit eventual intergroup harmony.

At a community hospital in the midwestern United States, the medical staff complained that their CEO and her administrative team were ignoring, and even thwarting, patient initiatives and recommendations essential to improving the quality of patient care. This perceived behavior on the part of administration threatened the very essence of who the physicians believed themselves to be (those having control over medical decisions for their patients). Given that threat, the physicians retaliated by attacking the very core of the administrative team's professional identity (those in control of the organization's future) by refusing to buy into and support the vision they had for the hospital. This behavior led the administrators to withhold further support for the physicians' recommendations, and it led to the physicians' eventual costly and painful attempts to remove the CEO. Over time, the situation spiraled out of control in that the original dispute multiplied exponentially into numerous seemingly unrelated battles, such as fights over allocation of funds (O'Connor & Anison, 2002).

Intergroup conflicts are ubiquitous in organizations. These conflicts often involve, but are not limited to, disputes over interests and resources (Kriesberg, 2003). As in the example above, many conflicts are also characterized by tensions stemming from differences in how groups fundamentally define themselves and from threats to those self-definitions. Numerous scholars have noted that when identities are implicated in a conflict, the conflict tends to escalate, encompassing an ever-widening number of issues (e.g., Northrup, 1989; Rothman, 1997; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Parties then become trapped in an ongoing conflict spiral from which they have difficulty extricating themselves (e.g., Coleman, 2003; Diehl & Goertz, 1993; Zartman, 2005).

The example is illustrative of a widespread problem not only in health care but in numerous types of organizational settings with interdependent groups. Research in a variety of areas is converging on the importance of identity dynamics in understanding ongoing and persistently negative interactions in organizations between and among professional groups and administrators (O'Connor, Fiolo, & Guthrie, 2006; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997), between artists and business people (e.g., musicians and symphony board members; Glynn, 2000), between labor and management (Fisher, 1983; Haydu, 1989), between external and internal constituencies (Dalton, 2003; Lewicki, Gray, & Elliott, 2003), and between and among different demographic groups

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(Friedman & Davidson, 1999; Tomlinson & Lewicki, 2006).

Unfortunately, as Rothman notes, "When people's essential identities, as expressed and maintained by their primary group affiliations, are threatened or frustrated, intransigent conflict almost inevitably follows. For such conflicts, conventional methods of conflict management are usually inadequate and may even exacerbate the problem" (1997: 5). The difficulty of managing such conflicts creates serious challenges for organizations that serve as arenas where these conflicts play out. Identity conflicts can alter members' attributions of behavior and distort communication (Friedman & Davidson, 1999; Northrup, 1989; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998), which can lead to costly errors, decreased learning in organizations, and increased turnover (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). When groups are in conflict, organizations are also less likely to derive benefits such as flexibility and creativity, which are associated with diversity and plurality in organizations (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). While some of these outcomes are true of many forms of conflict, they are exacerbated when identity is involved because such conflicts are long-lasting and expansive, thereby straining working relationships and ultimately threatening the organization's survival. Moreover, the potential for conflicts based on group identities is likely to increase as organizations continue to globalize and become more diverse (e.g., Ohlott, Chrobot-Mason, & Dalton, 2004), as professional and nonprofessional roles become increasingly interdependent (e.g., Wallace, 1995), and as unions potentially revitalize in a global economy (e.g., Turner, 2005).

Although there is a lack of systematic treatment of such long-standing disputes in the organizational literature (Bunker, Alban, & Lewicki, 2004), the nature of identity-based conflicts has been well documented in the literature on intractable social conflicts. However, even this literature has yet to converge on a model for managing these conflicts. There is recognition that identity beliefs of the conflicting parties must change in order to resolve intractable conflicts (Kelman, 2006; Northrup, 1989), but we know very little about the nature of the necessary identity changes and even less about how and why they occur.

The main purpose of this paper is to address these limitations. We draw on theories of con-

flict management, social identity, and organizational identification to propose a model for moving from intractable identity conflicts (IICs) to enduring intergroup harmony in organizations. We take very seriously the notion forwarded by prior researchers that if identity is part of the problem, it must also be part of the solution (Kelman, 2006; Northrup, 1989). The proposed model identifies a multiphase process by which the conflicting parties' identities shift in order to permit eventual harmonious intergroup relations. Following Kilduff (2006: 252), our model development is motivated by problems in the world, not just gaps in the literature. The paper contributes "actionable knowledge," which, according to Argyris, describes, explains, and informs users not only about "what is likely to happen under the specified conditions but how to create the conditions and actions in the first place" (1996: 392).

INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS AND IDENTITY

Intractable conflicts are *protracted* and *social* conflicts that resist resolution (Burgess & Burgess, 2006; Northrup, 1989; Pruitt & Olczak, 1995; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003). These labels are often used to describe ethnonational (Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 2004, 2005), societal (Sen, 2006), and environmental conflicts (Lewicki et al., 2003). Research on intractable conflicts has tended to take one of two forms: (1) an analysis of their characteristics or (2) a description of techniques for managing them. Identity has been integral to the first perspective; it is largely absent in the second.

Characteristics of Intractable Conflicts

Researchers view intractability as a dynamic property of intergroup relations, with conflicts becoming more or less intractable over time (e.g., Burgess & Burgess, 2006; Crocker et al., 2005; Lewicki et al., 2003; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003). There is considerable consensus on the characteristics of these conflicts. One central characteristic of intractable conflicts is that they are *long-standing* (e.g., Coleman, 2003; Diehl & Goertz, 1993; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998; Zartman, 2005), lasting for years or even generations. For example, the union-management conflicts at United Airlines have lasted for over twenty years (Bradsher, 2000). Intractable conflicts are

also believed to be *pervasive* or *chronically salient* to those involved (Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Such pervasiveness is illustrated in a recent survey of hospital CEOs in the United States, which showed that problematic physician-administrator relations were among their top concerns, second only to financial woes (Evans, 2007). Such conflicts also infiltrate multiple spheres of life (e.g., work and nonwork), weaving together identity and resource-related issues (Rothman, 1997), some of which are not directly related to the initial conflict. In the example at the beginning of this paper, an identity dispute over the legitimacy of patient quality initiatives expanded to include numerous seemingly unrelated resource-based battles, ending with attempts by the physicians to remove the CEO. The tendency to expand beyond the original dispute increases the complexity of these conflicts.

Many researchers view identity as being implicated in intractable conflicts. Specifically, intractable conflicts are characterized by *simplifying stereotypes* and *zero-sum conceptualizations of identity* (Azar, 1986; Coleman, 2003; Kelman, 1999, 2006; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003; Zartman, 2005). The identities of parties in intractable conflicts are negatively interdependent such that a key component of each group's identity is based on negation of the other group (Kelman, 1999, 2006; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003). That is, for Groups A and B, a salient part of Group A's identity is *not* being a member of Group B, and vice versa. Furthermore, for one group to maintain its legitimacy, it must delegitimize the other.

In the identification literature, defining who one is based on who one is *not* is called "disidentification" (Dukerich, Kramer, & Parks, 1998; Elsbach, 1999; Pratt, 2000). Groups who are bound up in IICs are in a state of *mutual disidentification*, which is strengthened because of cognitive simplifications whereby parties ignore the potential plurality of outgroup members' identities. "The foundations of degradation include not only descriptive misrepresentation, but also the illusion of a singular identity that others must attribute to the person demeaned" (Sen, 2006: 8). To illustrate, Glynn (2000: 290) observed that in a conflict between musicians and a symphony board, both sides engaged in heated, mutual disidentification, with musicians perceiving the diverse board members as

"money-grubbing weasels" and board members viewing all musicians as overly idealistic and unwilling to understand the financial picture. Disidentification has a strong evaluative/affective component (Pratt, 2000); in intractable conflicts, disidentification is expressed in strong emotions, including hatred, pride, and fear (Coleman, 2003; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003; Sen, 2006; Wedge, 1987). Table 1 provides evidence of these characteristics in two conflictive settings: (1) physician-administrator relations in the hospital described in the opening vignette and (2) labor-management relations at United Airlines.

Of all the characteristics of IICs noted in Table 1, identity is not only the most central but also helps to explain the presence of the others. For example, as a core construct that links the individual with larger collectives (Cooley, 1922; Northrup, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), identity explains why such conflicts are both salient and emotional. Moreover, since attacks on identity lead to information distortion, it becomes clearer why dialogue and negotiation often fail and why conflicts persist over time and become institutionalized. This perspective is supported by examining the small body of research on how intractable conflicts develop. This research suggests that intractable conflicts often begin when a group's identity is invalidated by another party (Kriesberg, 1986; Northrup, 1989; Zartman, 2005). Since identity is central to how people make sense of the world, this invalidation is followed by a distortion of information to fit prior beliefs (Friedman & Davidson, 1999; Northrup, 1989; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). As communication continues to deteriorate, boundaries between "us" and "them" become more rigid. Finally, conflicts can become normalized (Stock, 2001) as the conflicting parties begin to collude to continue the conflict (Crocker et al., 2005; Northrup, 1989; Zartman, 2005).

Because of the centrality of identity in the organizational conflicts we have discussed, and because of its importance in characterizing intractable conflicts in the literature (Coleman, 2003; Crocker et al., 2004; Gray, 2003), we call such conflicts "*intractable identity* conflicts." The term highlights that intractable conflicts are difficult to resolve largely because parties are trapped in ongoing mutual disidentification. We now turn to a discussion of resolution attempts.

TABLE 1
Illustrative Examples of Intractable Identity Conflicts (IICs)

Characteristic	Evidence of IIC at a Community Hospital, 1980s–2007 (O'Connor & Annison, 2002; O'Connor & Bujak, 2001)	Evidence of IIC at United Airlines, 1980s–2007 (Bradsher, 2000; Bryant, 1994; Maynard & Walsh, 2004; Wong, 2002)
Long-standing	Pressure from physicians resulted in removal of the prior two hospital CEOs. A long history of competition and mistrust was again coming to a head in the late 1990s, with an attempt to oust a third CEO.	As early as 1985, United Airlines pilots went on strike to protest the persistent diversification strategies pursued by CEOs who were also hoteliers (e.g., Edward Carlson and later Richard Ferris). Conflicts continued over the years and became especially fierce after 2002, with United's filing for and subsequent emergence from bankruptcy.
Pervasive/chronically salient	Everyone seemed to agree about only one thing: there was no basis for physician-administrator trust at the hospital. Senior physician leaders were unified in their commitment to remove the CEO, who was clearly defined as the enemy. These unified physicians were seen as the enemy from the point of view of senior administrators. Projects forwarded by physician leaders were typically ignored, and the administrative vision was generally disregarded by the physicians.	For much of the period after 1985, employees (especially in the ALPA and IAM unions) were openly critical of the management team. Moreover, the crisis remained intense. For example, over a seven-year span, employees made five attempts to secure some ownership of the company before they succeeded.
Expansion beyond original dispute	One thing was clear: collaboration was dead, and there was little agreement about the causes of the tragedy. Medical staff leaders and senior administrators could not even agree about who should facilitate the upcoming retreat in the mid 1990s. Medical staff demanded that it be a physician, but this was unacceptable to administrators, who did not believe their views would be appropriately represented, and vice versa. Unified action among physicians and administrators was at an all-time low, and patient and community initiatives were hopelessly at a standstill.	Original disputes between pilots and the management team were about job security and wages. Over time, conflict spread to other areas, including mergers and acquisitions, the dropping of Pacific routes, issues of employee ownership, and issues associated with the company's recent bout with bankruptcy. Employee-management conflicts expanded over time to an increasing number of unions (e.g., flight attendants).
Simplifying stereotypes	Administrators were seen by physicians as having little understanding of or appreciation for clinical needs and little commitment to the well-being of patients. Physicians were seen by administrators as neither understanding nor appreciating the impact of their choices on costs and their implications for long-term financial viability.	United's management team viewed pilots and other employees as having little to no understanding of finance and corporate strategy. Employees, in contrast, viewed management as too self-interested and uncaring. They felt management did little to protect them. Given management initiatives on such issues as seniority and subsequent employee reactions, there is some indirect evidence that management was viewed as not understanding airline culture and as being too driven by the bottom line.
Zero-sum conceptualizations	Physicians believed they must take control of the hospital in order to improve quality of care. Administrators believed they must take control of the hospital in order to preserve the financial viability of this community asset.	Despite the damage to the airline because of poor employee-management relations, management teams and labor unions pursued their own interests separately, with one group's gains seen as the others' loss. For example, pilots and some other

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Characteristic	Evidence of IIC at a Community Hospital, 1980s–2007 (O'Connor & Annison, 2002; O'Connor & Bujak, 2001)	Evidence of IIC at United Airlines, 1980s–2007 (Bradsher, 2000; Bryant, 1994; Maynard & Walsh, 2004; Wong, 2002)
Mutual disidentification	Administrators clearly identified themselves as not being like those physicians whom they viewed as complaining a lot, only interested in their own personal well-being, inflexible, and unwilling to examine their own failings. For their part, physicians took pride in defining themselves as distinctively different from administrators, whom they viewed as focused on reducing costs (versus patient well-being) and padding their resumes to move on (versus having a long-term commitment to the community). Given that each group defined itself in terms of being different from the other, neither wanted to listen to or be associated with the other's perspective.	employees believed that the management team's success in merger and acquisitions came at a cost to their seniority system and their jobs. The management team, in contrast, saw failures in these endeavors as major blows to its future profits. The management team defined itself as not being like pilots and some other employees who only thought about their own interests and not the company's future profitability. Pilots and other employees disidentified themselves from managers who, they believed, did not understand the nature of the industry or the work of the employees. Both groups disparaged the other side. For example, one article stated that "management says United is dragged down by the most expensive labor contracts in the business. The unions maintain that management has made several horrendous business moves, especially an ill-fated attempt to buy US Airways that was blocked by the Justice Department last year. Now, they say, United is making another by threatening a bankruptcy filing, a move that would probably wipe out the value of UAL stock" (Wong, 2002: 2).

Managing IICs

Crocker et al. argue that while "much analytical work has focused on the causes of these conflicts and the forces that contribute to their intractability," there has been much less research on "ending conflict in the so-called intractable cases" (2004: 4). Our review of the literature suggests that research has yet to coalesce around a specific set of techniques or models for resolving or managing intractable conflicts. One possible reason for this fragmentation may be that much of the work in this area has focused on specific tactics that are useful in managing only certain aspects of the conflict, eschewing prescriptions for managing such conflicts from their earliest stages up through the establishment of enduring intergroup harmony. For example, research has addressed the management of emotion through art, storytelling, or joking (e.g., Maiese, 2006; Retzinger & Scheff, 2000) and the management of stereotypes through the shifting of conflict frames (e.g.,

Gray, 2003; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003; Shmueli, Elliott, & Kaufman, 2006). More general tactics have also been proposed, including the delineation of the general skills (e.g., listening and humility) needed by conflicting parties and their mediators (e.g., Portilla, 2006), along with specific suggestions on how to run a workshop for disputing parties (e.g., Kelman, 2001; Kelman & Cohen, 1986). Some fuller-scale approaches or models have been developed—largely to aid third-party mediators in such conflicts¹—in an attempt to embrace larger portions of the conflict management process (e.g., Linskold, 1986; Rothman, 1997). However, these models have

¹ These models include ARIA—Antagonism, Resonance, Intervention, Action (Rothman, 1997); GRIT—Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension reduction (Linskold, 1986; Tomlinson & Lewicki, 2006); MACABE—Motivation, Affect, Cognition, Behavior, and the surrounding Environment (Pruitt & Olczak, 1995); and transformative mediation (Bush & Folger, 1994; Spangler, 1993).

typically used classic negotiation and other conflict management techniques, largely ignoring the role of identity.

In the rare cases where identity is mentioned as being critical to resolving intractable conflicts, the specifics for its management are left vague or undefined. For example, Northrup argued that "if change occurs in the identities of at least one of the parties, the chances for long-term change are greatly increased, particularly if the change involves core aspects of identity that are directly related to the conflict" (1989: 78). However, she did not specify how such identity change occurs. The concept of identity negotiations has also been proposed (Bar-Tal, Kruglanski, & Klar, 1989; Kelman, 2006; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Here again, however, this work has failed to specify how to engage in such a process in order to remove "the negation of the other party as a central component of each party's own identity" (Kelman, 2006: 23).

To summarize, our review of the intractable conflict literature suggests that while identity is believed to be central to the formation and conceptualization of intractable conflicts, there has not been (to our knowledge) a systematic attempt to understand how the management of identity may help to resolve intractability and facilitate sustained intergroup harmony. Our purpose here is to address this gap so as to enrich theory and build actionable knowledge.

A MULTIPHASE MODEL FOR IIC RESOLUTION

The ultimate goal of our model is to delineate the phases by which groups mired in IICs can move toward enduring harmonious intergroup relations. The *Cambridge International Dictionary* defines harmonious as "peaceful," which denotes agreement and accord, in addition to a lack of conflict. The model assumes that people's readiness to begin a change process does not, in and of itself, lead directly to intergroup harmony. Rather, readiness provides the foundation for three distinct *identity shifts* through which the conflicting groups must pass in order to achieve enduring harmony: decoupled intergroup identities, subgroup identity security, and dual identity strength. Each phase of our model provides a necessary but not sufficient condition

for enduring harmony, and successful completion of the prior phase is necessary to carry out each subsequent phase of the model.

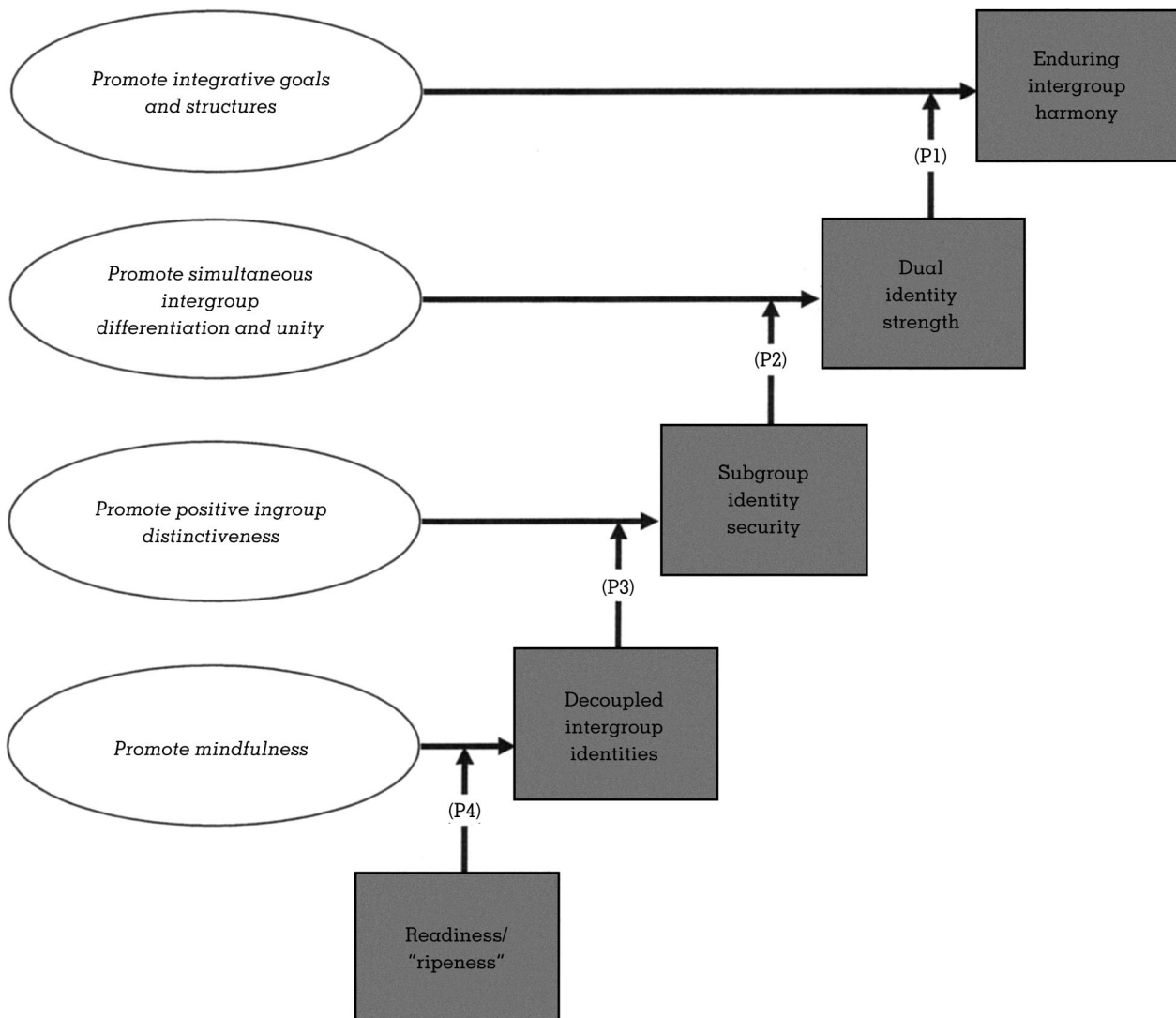
Partly as a function of the different literature on which we draw, particularly social identity theory and organizational identification, much of the process we describe is focused on individual identity dynamics within an intergroup setting. However, the overall process is inherently multilevel in that individual identity beliefs are lower-level constructs (e.g., identity of an airline pilot) that aggregate to higher-level constructs (e.g., security of pilots' identity as a group). Ultimately, our model proposes relationships among higher-level constructs (e.g., nature and strength of group-level identities and harmonious intergroup relations).

Figure 1 shows the four phases underlying the IIC resolution model and the process interventions and states that mark the passage through these phases. The ovals on the left of the figure depict the interventions thought to lead to the states shown in the shaded boxes. We review evidence but do not provide propositions for these main effects since (1) each of them has been discussed in existing research and (2) the results of these main effects are not consistent. To explain these inconsistencies, we forward propositions about how previous phases affect subsequent ones.

We begin our discussion of the model with the ultimate end state—enduring intergroup harmony—and discuss the process interventions that have been proposed to achieve such harmonious relations. We then note the shortcomings of these interventions in the context of intractable conflict and propose that the accomplishment of the model's prior state (strong dual identities) makes these interventions more effective. We continue with this pattern, using the limitations of current theorizing as the motivation for proposing each of the moderating effects. Beginning our discussion of the model with the end state allows us to demonstrate at each phase the need for achieving the prior state in order to move on to the subsequent one.

Beginning at the top of the figure, we know that promoting integrative goals and structures may lead to intergroup harmony. However, in the face of intractable conflicts, such goals and structures are likely to be threatening unless both parties can begin to identify with the superordinate identity (e.g., a hospital) in addi-

FIGURE 1
Intractable Identity Conflict (IIC) Resolution Model



tion to their own subgroup identity (e.g., physician or administrator)—known as holding dual identities. Research suggests that promoting simultaneous differentiation and unity of intergroup membership may promote dual identities for the members of each group, but only when the superordinate identity does not threaten the distinctiveness that provides each group its identity security. However, the prescribed interventions for developing identity security are not likely to succeed unless the mutual disidentification that is at the heart of IICs is resolved

by decoupling the intergroup identities. Finally, identity decoupling will not result from interventions to promote participants' ability to mindfully reconsider the nature of intergroup relations unless they are ready to come to the negotiating table (known as conflict ripeness). In sum, the move from one state to the next must be sequentially ordered to lead to the desired outcome of enduring intergroup harmony. The following expanded descriptions of each phase are organized around the components of the IIC resolution model depicted in Figure 1.

Promoting Integrative Goals and Structures Leads to Enduring Intergroup Harmony—But Not Always

The challenge of managing intergroup conflicts has been a central and consistent theme in the study of intergroup relations for at least a century (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; Sumner, 1906). The focus of this work has tended to be on ways to get conflicting subgroups to see themselves as working together harmoniously toward common superordinate goals that each of the subgroups can identify with but that cannot be achieved by any single subgroup. Although a number of studies have provided evidence consistent with the view that conflicting groups can learn to work together harmoniously if given a superordinate goal (e.g., Kahn & Ryen, 1972; Worchel, Andreoli, & Folger, 1977), the scope of these positive findings is mostly limited to research using ad hoc groups that have no history together. In studies of real-life or preexisting subgroups, the findings have been inconclusive, indicating that promoting superordinate goals does not always reduce conflicts and sometimes even worsens them (e.g., Brown, 1978; Skevington, 1980).

A related approach for bringing groups with different orientations together has been structural integration to promote self-categorization of the subgroups as on the same team. The rationale is that such integration will lead to better understanding of each other and a greater awareness of the many similar values and attitudes of the "other," despite the differences (Cook, 1984). Assuming that ignorance may cause prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 1984), this approach seeks to reduce ignorance in order to enhance intergroup harmony. Structural integration mechanisms include promoting direct contact among the parties, establishing liaison roles, and creating integrated teams and/or departments. Here again, support is mixed. For example, increasing intergroup contact sometimes leads to greater intergroup harmony but to greater hostility at other times (Desivilya, 1998; Worchel, 1986).

Our earlier discussion of the unique nature of IICs points to why conflicts may actually worsen if a common set of superordinate goals and/or structural linkages is imposed on group members. If groups share a long history of being bound together by mutual disidentification, a

common goal would seem to be heresy. In fact, since each subgroup's identity may well be threatened by a superordinate goal that is acceptable to the other subgroup, members are likely to react with increased levels of disidentification. Structural mechanisms, too, will likely have little impact at best. As we noted earlier, one of the characteristics of intractable conflict is that parties in the conflict tend to filter new information to conform with their beliefs (Northrup, 1989). The new information gained through structural integration, therefore, is not likely to alter the state of ignorance about the other. In fact, it is likely to be filtered in a selective way that provides further support for the negative stereotypes.

Significant evidence from studies of U.S. health care systems suggests that decades of attempts to structurally integrate hospitals and physicians (through joint ventures, mergers, or other structural mechanisms) and decades of visioning retreats aimed at unifying them toward similar goals have had limited success (O'Connor et al., 2006). For example, one common way to structurally integrate physicians and administrators in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States was through hospitals' direct ownership of physician practices. The logic was that if hospitals owned physician groups, they would be aligned because they would share the same goals and objectives. For the most part, these vertically integrated systems failed to produce the intended results, often leading instead to a decrease in physician productivity and an increase in ill sentiment toward the system (Holm, 2000). Under intractable conflict conditions there is little space for harmonious relations to take root from such integrative activities.

Social identity theorists (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) have similarly noted that attempts to bring subgroups together, highlighting their oneness in working toward one set of superordinate goals, might produce the unintended result of actually driving them farther apart. Hornsey and Hogg (2000), for example, found that humanities and math-science students showed the strongest intergroup bias when the superordinate category (university student) alone was made salient. They argued that since social identities derive from group memberships and comparisons with other groups, superordinate goals that focus exclusively on what groups have in common can threaten a group's distinc-

tiveness. Such threats can lead to increased attempts to differentiate one's group from the other and to an increased bias against the other group (Crisp, Stone, & Hall, 2006). As Huo and Molina note, "An emphasis on a common identity can have a boomerang effect—motivating the desire to defend the neglected subgroup and thus highlighting the very group differences the strategy intended to attenuate" (2006: 360).

These dynamics are likely to be even more extreme in groups that share a long history of mutually disidentifying with each other, especially if the superordinate goal is perceived to encompass the interests of the outgroup (Kriesberg, 2003). When identities are perceived as zero sum, any gain for the outgroup will be seen as a loss for the ingroup. For example, at United Airlines, managers and pilots have historically framed mergers and acquisitions as win-lose endeavors (e.g., if managers "win," pilots lose seniority—see Table 1). So while we agree that the development of superordinate goals can provide a needed direction for groups and integrating structures can enhance their understanding of one another, these efforts are likely to fail if group members have been engaged in IICs.

The Moderating Role of Dual Identity Strength

Research has provided evidence for a somewhat counterintuitive approach for managing identity perceptions to bring about intergroup harmony (e.g., Gaertner, Bachman, Dovidio, & Banker, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). When both subgroup and superordinate identities are maintained (referred to as *dual identities*), one can anticipate greater acceptance of the opposing subgroup. It follows that the adoption of dual identities will lead to greater acceptance of integrative goals or structures that incorporate the opposing subgroup's interests.

Dual identities have, in fact, been associated with reduced intergroup bias by group members. For example, in the Hornsey and Hogg (2000) university student experiment described above, the least amount of intergroup bias occurred in the dual identity condition, suggesting the least likelihood of resisting integrative goals or structures. These results were recently replicated by Crisp et al. (2006), who found that students whose disciplinary training (e.g., humanities or science) and university affiliation

were both activated were likewise resistant to intergroup bias. Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) reported further empirical evidence of the potential for a dual identity approach to minimize intergroup bias (and, thus, to pave the way for intergroup harmony) by examining both ethnic and organizational identities: when members of ethnic subgroups in a multiethnic high school experienced a dual identity—that is, identifying with both their ethnic subgroup and the school as a whole—there was decreased intergroup bias. In a similar vein, Bizman and Yinon (2004) noted that the perception of dual identities in Israeli secular-religious contexts was the only predictor that individuals would use a problem-solving rather than a contentious mode for managing conflict. We theorize that holding both identities predicted more of a problem-solving mode because it led to less intergroup bias, opening group members to the possibility of conceiving of themselves as having enough in common with their outgroup to look for solutions acceptable to both groups. Building on these findings, we propose that strong dual identities strengthen the impact of efforts to promote integrative goals and structures because they reduce intergroup bias and open the door for harmonious interactions.

Proposition 1: The stronger the dual identities, the greater the probability that promoting integrative goals and structures will lead to enduring intergroup harmony.

Promoting Intergroup Differentiation and Unity Leads to Dual Identity Strength—But Not Always

The literature on dual identities (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000) suggests that priming people to perceive themselves as both similar to and different from members of other subgroups facilitates the adoption of dual identities. These ideas have yet to be widely incorporated into mainstream organizational conflict theories. As Brewer (2001) has pointed out, the implicit assumption in much of the work on intergroup identity conflict has been that members' attachment to their ingroup will inevitably lead to outgroup hostility, making it difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of developing dual identities encompass-

ing both a subgroup and a superordinate identity that includes the outgroup. Yet researchers have failed to find any straightforward negative correlation between ingroup positivity and intergroup hostility (Hinkle & Brown, 1990). Even at a physiological level, positive and negative evaluative processes appear to occur within different, independent neurological systems that may or may not be reciprocally activated (Brewer & Brown, 1998). So increased positive affect toward the ingroup does not necessarily result in increased negative affect toward the outgroup, making it possible to hold dual identities without significant cognitive dissonance.

Roccas and Brewer (2002) have referred to the capacity to hold dual identities as *social identity complexity*, which reflects the degree of overlap perceived to exist between the subgroups one is a member of. The less individuals perceive the subgroups they belong to as sharing the same members and the same prototypical attributes, the more complex their social identities will be. Of course, the complexity required for dual identity development varies. At one extreme, when there is a sense of continuity between the subgroup and superordinate identities (Van Knippenberg & Van Leeuwen, 2001), promoting both is relatively straightforward. They may easily coexist even when different, as long as they are not inherently in conflict with one another or mutually exclusive. For example, in the aforementioned subgroups in the multiethnic high school field study, groups had dual identities that were unrelated—an ethnic identity and a superordinate high school identity (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Similarly, in lab studies subjects have been successfully primed to adopt noncompeting dual identities (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). In these settings there was little conflict between subgroup and superordinate identities; they could coexist without threatening each other.

At the other extreme, strong dual identities are more difficult for people to adopt, and greater identity complexity is required when the identities are perceived as conflicting with one another. Even if leaders attempt to promote new identity frames that are not at odds with each other (i.e., frames not based on mutual disidentification), in settings with a long history of intractable conflicts, people may distort information (Northrup, 1989) and ignore the new frames.

Implicit and overlearned conceptions of self in relation to the "other" often linger long after the actual context shifts (Pelham & Hetts, 1999). If the subgroup and superordinate identities continue to be seen as opposed to one another, it is highly unlikely that people will adopt strong dual identities, even if they are primed to perceive both intergroup unity and differentiation.

This may explain why Gaertner and his colleagues (Gaertner et al., 2001; Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Ward, & Banker, 1999) found that in the contexts of both banking mergers and blended stepfamilies, simultaneous perceptions of subgroup differentiation and intergroup unity were associated with *less* favorable intergroup relations than perceptions of a single unified group. The authors speculated that the continued salience of the earlier subgroup identities (along with the superordinate identity) may have been perceived as threatening the primary goal of combining the subgroups. An alternative and perhaps more likely interpretation of their results, given the pervasive nature of threats to preexisting subgroup identities (Brewer, 2001; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000), is the reverse but complementary interpretation: the superordinate identity may have been emphasized as the more salient of the two identities, thus dominating and threatening each subunit's preexisting identity. Since amalgamation was seen as the primary goal of the mergers/blended families, it is reasonable to assume that intergroup relations suffered in the dual identity condition because members may not have felt secure enough about the value and positive distinctiveness of their preexisting subgroup for sufficiently strong dual identities to develop or be maintained.

The Moderating Role of Subgroup Identity Security

We suspect that if the subgroup identities had been sufficiently secure in their distinctiveness in the Gaertner et al. (1999, 2001) merged banks and stepfamily studies, the superordinate identity would have been less threatening to the prior subgroup identities, leading to greater acceptance of strong dual identities and an associated decrease in intergroup bias. Berry's (1991) work suggests that it is security in one's own subgroup identity, not simply strong positive attitudes toward one's group, that predicts toler-

ance of another group. Building on this work, we argue that identity security (a feeling of safety or protection) may play a more important role than identity strength (positive attitudes toward one's own group) in reducing potential threats. Failure to distinguish between security and strength may help to explain why no clear linkages between ingroup positivity and outgroup negativity have been found (Brewer, 2001).

Researchers have found evidence supporting the notion that security in one's subgroup identity is associated with greater acceptance of a superordinate identity. Identity security, for example, appears to be integral to building pluralistic societies where subgroup and superordinate identities are held simultaneously (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). Huo and Molina's (2006) study of an ethnically diverse population of Californians shows that minority groups (e.g., African Americans and Latinos) that experience the security that comes from subgroup respect are more likely to feel positive toward a common American identity (cf. Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, & Pratto, 1997). And although they did not start out with the condition that subgroup identities are zero sum, Haslam, Eggins, and Reynolds (2003) developed a model (ASPIRe) suggesting that subgroups must first be secure in delineating their own needs (i.e., "subcasing") before subgroup goals can be integrated with superordinate goals. Common to these treatments is the assumption that security in one's subgroup identity is related to its validated *distinctiveness* from the superordinate identity. As we have noted, attempting to build security by promoting how subgroups are similar is likely to backfire (Huo & Molina, 2006).

While subgroup identity security is important even in group settings where conflicts are relatively recent (e.g., in newly merged banks), the potential for the rejection of superordinate identities, and therefore dual identities, is even greater when subgroups have been steeped in long-term intractable conflicts (see Table 1). We further argue that identity security—in the form of validated, distinct subgroup identities—is especially important if subgroup and superordinate identities are perceived as competing with one another. Secure subgroup identities create the psychological safety necessary to accept dual identities with less defensiveness. This leads us to propose that efforts to simulta-

neously promote intergroup differentiation and unity in order to develop dual identities in the face of intractable conflicts are more likely to succeed if members feel secure and validated in their own distinctive subgroups.

Proposition 2: The more secure the subgroup identities, the greater the probability that the promotion of simultaneous intergroup differentiation and unity will lead to the development of strong dual identities.

Promoting Positive Distinctiveness Leads to Identity Security—But Not Always

We have argued that subgroup members will feel less threatened by a superordinate identity if they feel secure in their own subgroup's distinctiveness. A number of researchers have described distinctiveness-inducing techniques, which often highlight the unique and attractive qualities of the subgroup (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Fiol, 2002). Linguistic techniques, such as the use of inclusive referents ("we"), which strengthen group bonds and make groups feel special, serve a similar distinctiveness-defining role (Cheney, 1983; Fiol, 1989). Finally, engaging subgroup members in common tasks that ignite their passion about fulfilling a meaningful purpose and explaining the unique purpose of their common tasks are other means of developing secure subgroup identities (Fiol, 2002; Pratt, 2000). Implicit in these techniques is not just that groups are made to feel distinctive but that such assessments are made by building up the ingroup—that is, by promoting *positive* distinctiveness.

None of the research on promoting subgroup distinctiveness has addressed the challenges of achieving security when subgroups are mired in IICs. We have noted that in such cases clear lines of distinctiveness are indeed drawn between the groups, but they are lines that promote mutual "dehumanization" (Northrup, 1989: 72)—distinctiveness based on negative comparisons—which we refer to as *negative distinctiveness*. Subgroup members thus may well feel positively secure in relation to the negative other, but this type of security based on negative comparisons is likely to block, rather than facilitate, the development of dual identities.

Research has described how identity security may be promoted by making negative comparisons, such as promoting identification through antithesis (Cheney, 1983). In the case of IICs, subgroups mutually disidentify by defining themselves in opposition to the "negative other." As Gray argues, when intractable conflicts involve negative identity frames (e.g., mutual disidentification), such "identity challenges call into question how a group [the 'other'] has defined itself and even its very right to exist" (2003: 21). This occurs, for example, when physicians define hospitals primarily in terms of places of care giving and view business-minded administrators, at best, as a necessary evil (O'Connor et al., 2006).

Such negative sources of a group's distinctiveness are likely to prevent members from seeking positive distinctiveness. In other words, the somewhat ironic condition of groups in IICs is that they have developed a sense of identity security based on their mutual negation of one another, therefore sensing no urgency to search for other sources of positive distinctiveness (Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003). Thus, for example, mutual disidentification continued unabated at United Airlines, even when the organization was in a state of bankruptcy (see Table 1). Without the removal of negative distinctiveness, there is likely to be limited receptiveness to techniques for promoting positive distinctiveness in intractable conflict situations. That is, each subgroup already feels good about its superiority vis-à-vis the other, thus requiring no further positive distinctiveness.

The Moderating Role of Decoupled Identities

Relinquishing mutual disidentification as the primary source of each subgroup's identity security requires some acknowledgement of the validity of the other subgroup's world view, even if there remains bitter disagreement (Kelman, 2006). For this to occur, the mutually disidentified identities must be decoupled or disentangled from one another so that one subgroup's identity security is not dependent on the other's demise. Intergroup identity decoupling opens the door for positively based subgroup identity security to take the place of the negatively based security.

The benefits of disentangling subgroup identities bound by mutual disidentification can be

extrapolated from earlier research. For example, some have argued that under conditions where group identities are in conflict but must be maintained in an organization, identities should be compartmentalized (Pratt & Foreman, 2000) before attempting to reconcile or bridge them (Pratt & Corley, 2007). Decoupling in our model, however, does not entail physical or temporal separation or compartmentalization of subgroups (cf. Breakwell, 1986; McCall & Simmons, 1978). Rather, it refers to a psychological state of separation. Because groups engaged in IICs identify themselves, in part, as not being members of the opposing subgroup, decoupling entails cutting out those identity elements that link the two parties in the destructive dance of mutual disidentification. It requires groups to let go of the assumption that "they" must lose in order for "us" to win, opening the possibility for the battling parties to relate in less destructive ways.

Most of the work on identity decoupling comes out of research on intractable conflicts and international diplomacy. In particular, Kelman's (1999, 2006) and Kelman and Cohen's (1986) extensive efforts to engage Israelis and Palestinians in decoupling from their negative interdependence stand as exemplars of the need for this process to occur before either side can gain a strong positive sense of self not linked to the destruction of the other. Participants and analysts agree that these decoupling efforts contributed significantly to paving the way to the early negotiations between the parties by creating an environment where the legitimacy of each side's concerns was upheld and mutual disidentification was broken down.

Building on this work, we argue that identity decoupling must precede attempts to develop more secure positive subgroup identities because it removes the negative distinctiveness that limits group members' receptiveness to techniques for promoting identity security through positive distinctiveness. Decoupling the identities before attempting to make each one more secure also reduces the risks often associated with "strengthening" former enemy groups (i.e., an enemy group with a strong identity may be more of a threat if the situation is seen as zero sum). Identity decoupling thus offers the opportunity for members to respond to techniques for promoting their own (and other) subgroup's pos-

itive distinctiveness and to become secure in their own sense of self.

Proposition 3: The more complete the intergroup identity decoupling, the greater the probability that promoting positive ingroup distinctiveness will lead to the development of subgroup identity security.

Promoting Mindfulness Leads to Decoupled Intergroup Identities—But Not Always

For subgroup members to revise their overly simplified negative views and polarizing stereotypes of the outgroup, they must develop the ability to let go of well-established patterns of perceiving and to begin to see things anew—a capacity that has been referred to as *mindfulness* (Fiol & O'Connor, 2003; Langer, 1989; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). Mindfulness has three key characteristics: (1) the creation of new categories of meaning, (2) openness to new information, and (3) an implicit awareness of multiple perspectives. The ability to at least temporarily suspend beliefs that have led to subgroups' negatively based identity security derives from the development of these three characteristics.

Mindfulness results from a reluctance to simplify. Fiol and O'Connor (2003) described mindless bandwagon behaviors as resulting from oversimplified interpretations that share some of the same collusive qualities of high levels of intergroup conflict intractability. Pratt and Doucet (2000: 213) illustrated this black-and-white dynamic by describing how a physician was perceived as "anti-patient and anti-profession" when he began to cooperate with a managed care provider. The physician's behavior illustrates a break from mindless zero-sum bandwagon perceptions and behaviors. His reluctance to simplify allowed for the possibility that managed care providers might not be all bad, thus opening the space to reconsider relationships with them. In the international arena, Kelman (1999, 2006) and Kelman and Cohen (1986) similarly engaged participants in problem-solving workshops, the main purpose of which was to help them form "more differentiated images of the enemy" in order for the negative intergroup dynamics to be dismantled (Kelman, 1998: 194).

The mindfulness literature suggests ways that such differentiation can be developed and nurtured (Fiol & O'Connor, 2003; Langer, 1989; Weick et al., 1999), often through interventions by third parties. For example, third parties may redefine, for conflicting parties, the meaning of "paying attention" by asking new kinds of questions, rather than demanding answers to prevailing questions (having well-developed responses). They may express conclusions in tentative rather than absolute terms and maintain ambiguity around relevant issues for as long as possible, resisting the temptation to find early closure and clarity for the problematic issues. All of the strategies for developing greater mindfulness have to do with shifting people's assumptions so as to discover unseen possibilities.

We agree that participants' abilities to mindfully rethink the nature of the intergroup relations, to see new categories of meaning besides "us versus them," and to be open to new information and perspectives are necessary conditions for intergroup identity decoupling, but these are not always sufficient conditions. For example, although physicians may mindfully understand the need to control costs in order to protect the long-term survival of their local hospital, they may nevertheless still be unwilling to constrain spending in their personal attempts to save a particular patient's life. In the case of intergroup identity decoupling, mindfulness creates the capacity or ability for people to engage in psychologically breaking down the negative coupling of identities. It does not create the willingness to do so.

The Moderating Role of Readiness/Ripeness

Even if mindfully capable of doing so, why would parties agree to take the first steps of decoupling, given that their very identity security depends on the identities remaining negatively coupled? As we noted, intergroup identity decoupling when groups are engaged in IICs requires parties to give up that part of their identity that is based on the "negative other." This is extremely difficult, since in these types of conflicts, negation of the other is not a peripheral or marginal element of each subgroup's identity that can easily be discarded (Kelman, 2004). In fact, the intergroup battles themselves are often a large part of each group's identity

(Ashmore, Jussim, Wilder, & Heppen, 2001; Northrup, 1989), making it difficult for the conflicting parties to see a way out or to see one another as anything but the enemy. As Zartman suggests, holding zero-sum identities "clouds the parties' perceptions of a hurting stalemate, since it provides the righteous cause that thrives on pain" (2005: 60). As a result, actions are interpreted as unilateral, all-or-nothing affairs.

Cutting away the negative sources of identity security (identity decoupling) entails a willingness to at least temporarily enter into a state of identity insecurity—some level of uncertainty about one's identity. In the literature on international diplomacy and intractable conflicts, readiness to take on identity insecurity is described as ripeness. For a conflict to be considered ripe, both parties must be motivated to resolve it (Pruitt & Olczak, 1995). Ripeness involves a readiness to commit to a "change in the nature of the relations of the parties from a competitive, hopeless, destructive orientation towards a more cooperative co-existence with potential for mutual gain" (Coleman, 2000: 302).

Conflict ripeness is not likely until people perceive either great threat if they fail to give up the old ways of relating or great benefit as a result of doing so. An existing body of research on ripeness has identified two main types of antecedents: potential for *significant* shared pain and/or mutual gain. Specifically, recent, impending, or near-miss crises; a common threat; the perception that the current situation is hurting both parties; or added incentives to cooperate (Coleman, 2000; Fiol & O'Connor, 2002; Pruitt & Olczak, 1995; Zartman, 2005; Zartman & Rubin, 2000) have all been posited to serve as motivators for subgroup members to reconsider their relationship with the outgroup. Coleman (2000) further has argued that negative forces that induce conflict ripeness may actually add additional stress to an already burdened relationship. He suggests that removing obstacles that prevent ripeness (e.g., decreasing mistrust; Tomlinson & Lewicki, 2006) may be a more effective means of encouraging ripeness. Whatever the driver, conditions have to be strong enough (e.g., significant pain or gain) to cut through members' distorted information processing in order to recognize the necessity to engage in change. Once motivated to come to the table, individuals in conflicting groups are likely to be

more willing to mindfully disentangle their identity from that of their "enemy."

Proposition 4: The riper the conflict, the greater the probability that efforts to promote participants' mindfulness will lead to decoupled intergroup identities.

In summary, the IIC resolution model proposes that the path from intractable conflict to enduring intergroup harmony involves moving through a series of states—from conflict ripeness to decoupled intergroup identities, to subgroup identity security, to strong dual identities, and, finally, to enduring harmonious intergroup relations. After the initial state of ripeness, each state is accomplished through the application of a specific set of interventions, moderated by the prior state (see Figure 1). To begin the process, subgroup members must break free from their mutual disidentification, an outcome facilitated by conflict ripeness and the promotion of mindfulness. The resulting decoupled identities may be insecure, especially since mutual antipathy may have been a large component of each subgroup's identity. Thus, we have suggested that leaders strengthen ingroup identity security by promoting the groups' positive distinctiveness. Once subgroup identities are validated and secure, they are more likely to provide the solid foundation from which to adopt a dual identity, an outcome that is facilitated by the simultaneous promotion of intergroup differentiation and unity. And only when group members hold strong dual identities will the promotion of integrative goals/structures be likely to lead to sustained intergroup harmony.

Groups may not need to begin this process at the "beginning" (developing readiness) if readiness already exists; they may not require intergroup identity decoupling if they are not currently experiencing mutual disidentification; promoting positive ingroup distinctiveness may be unnecessary if the groups are already secure in their (positive) subgroup identities; and promoting intergroup differentiation and unity may not be needed if they already hold strong dual identities. However, our model posits that each of the prior states must be developed if it does not already exist in order to achieve subsequent states in the model.

Although we have delineated the phases of this process as strictly sequential and distinct

from each other, we recognize that it will often be necessary to begin the subsequent phase before fully completing the preceding one. The beginning of decoupling encourages greater ripeness; positive identity security facilitates letting go of aspects of disidentification; seeing the possibility of holding dual identities that encompass the conflicting subgroups reduces the potential risk of enhancing the security of each one; and beginning to promote compelling superordinate goals and/or integrative structures gives subgroup members an overarching vision with which to identify, in addition to identifying with their own subgroup, thus facilitating the development of dual identities. Our emphasis on the necessary sequencing of the phases, thus, should not rule out that some degree of overlap between each consecutive phase is likely.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Theoretical Implications

The main contribution of the IIC resolution model developed in this paper is the identification of an ordered series of process interventions and necessary prior states to move from intractable conflict to intergroup harmony. Subject to empirical verification, we make three contributions to the literature on intractable conflicts. First, we enrich this research by introducing what is, to our knowledge, the first comprehensive model of intractability management that puts identity center stage in the process. As noted earlier, much extant work on resolving intractable conflicts has failed to systematically consider the role that social identity can play in the resolution of these conflicts. This oversight may be one reason why past attempts to manage these conflicts have met with mixed results and why calls continue for new insights into managing these conflicts (e.g., Burgess & Burgess, 2006; Crocker et al., 2004).

Second, we infuse much of the practice-based research on intractable conflicts with insights derived from various theoretical traditions. We draw most extensively from social identity theory, since this theory was designed to examine "impersonal" conflicts that arise between and among groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)—conditions that are mirrored, but historically intensified, in intractable conflicts. Specifically, we be-

lieve that research on intractable conflicts, which has only rarely drawn from social identity theory (see Desivilya, 1998, and Seull, 1999, for notable exceptions), can be greatly enriched by incorporating the states and intervening processes that lie between getting conflicting parties to the table (ripeness) and creating enduring intergroup harmony.

Third, our model highlights areas for further research on the management of intractable conflicts. For example, while research has recognized the role of emotion (Coleman, 2003; Sen, 2006; Putnam & Wondolleck, 2003), the link between identity and emotions in such conflicts has gone largely unexamined. We have argued that emotions are central to the mutual disidentification process since parties fail to verify the legitimacy of the other (see also Burke, 1991, and Burke & Harrod, 2005). However, as Sen (2006) has noted, identities are also a source of pride and therefore positive emotion. During intractable conflicts, identities are simultaneously verified by ingroup members and not verified by outgroup members. This suggests that mixed or ambivalent emotions may play a heretofore unexplored role in these conflicts (Wang & Pratt, 2008). Given that ambivalent emotions create instability and may amplify attitudes toward others (Katz & Glass, 1979), special care must be taken throughout the management process to avoid magnifying minor dislikes among members into hatred.

Finally, and more broadly, our model has the potential to contribute to research in areas beyond intractable conflicts. It highlights the mixed results of intervention efforts (e.g., promoting mindfulness does not always lead to identity decoupling) and presents moderating states to explain them. As such, the model contributes to research on dual identities, identity security, and intergroup identity decoupling. Our model also resonates with research on demographic conflict. Diversity researchers have long recognized the limitations inherent in an assimilation paradigm where the superordinate identity dominates and in a differentiation paradigm where subgroup identities dominate (Thomas & Ely, 1996). These paradigms are equally implausible in intractable conflicts. To the degree that the parallels hold, diversity research may benefit from a model that involves both securing subgroup identities and strengthening dual identities.

Practical Implications

Implementing our model presents a number of leadership challenges. In the beginning of the process, leaders must be aware that resources and interests—not just identities—are problematic. In fact, if researchers who study conflict ripeness are correct, leaders must recognize that resource- and interest-based issues may initially be perceived as more legitimate than identity issues for bringing people to the table and beginning the decoupling process (Coleman, 2000; Pruitt & Olczak, 1995; Zartman, 2005). So even though intractable conflicts often begin when a group's identity is invalidated, it may not be possible to begin the healing process around issues of identity. This is likely to feel much too threatening. Resource- and interest-based issues may be a safer way to initially motivate people to come to the table.

In the first few phases, as people move from decoupling to securing their identities, leaders must do two things in very close order: (1) promote a more differentiated view of the outgroup and (2) promote a more unified view of the ingroup. For example, even though physicians are a diverse lot, administrative personnel who find them problematic tend to view them stereotypically as a single entity ("the" physicians), leading to a bipolar dynamic, which must be overcome by promoting differentiated images of "the other." In the next phase leaders must promote more unified images of the ingroup. For example, most physicians do not think of themselves as belonging to one unified physician group and do not strongly identify with one another except in their common animosity toward administration (O'Connor et al., 2006; see Table 1). By removing that negative stimulus, leaders are, in fact, stripping individuals of one important source of their ingroup identity, making it essential to move quickly to positive ingroup identity development. In fact, leaders may need to toggle between the two phases, with the promise of subgroup security serving as a motivator to strip away negative distinctiveness.

In the next few phases, as leaders focus on developing dual identities and integrative goals and structures, they face the substantial challenge of motivating subgroup members to exert themselves on behalf of both their ingroup and the superordinate group that includes the outgroup. To start, ingroup members must move

beyond understanding that outgroup members hold multiple identities to realize that they do as well (i.e., social identity complexity). In addition, the simultaneous adoption of a subordinate and superordinate identity requires that the latter not be too closely aligned with either subgroup identity in order to avoid resistance from the other group. Subgroup identity projection is a defensive mechanism against identity threat or loss and occurs when a subgroup perceives itself to be more similar to, typical of, and normative for the inclusive superordinate identity category than the other subgroup (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). This projection is then used as a basis for devaluing the outgroup, which is perceived to be less similar to the superordinate identity. In some airlines, for example, this occurs when executives claim market power as a superordinate identity, which may appear to be a projection of the administrative (versus the pilot or aviation) identity of the airline (see Table 1). To avoid such projection, leaders must pay attention to the goals of the subgroups and the superordinate group. In their ASPIRE model, Haslam and colleagues (2003) suggest doing this by creating superordinate goals that build on the needs and goals of the subgroups (i.e., "super-casing") and creating a feedback system such that members of each subgroup can participate in the joint goal-setting process (i.e., "organic goal setting").

Finally, although the literature on conflict ripeness discusses the conditions under which parties will enter into the decoupling phase, we know very little about when to proceed to each subsequent phase in our model. In other words, when are the disidentified subgroup identities sufficiently decoupled to begin developing secure ingroup identities, the subgroup identities sufficiently secure to begin dual identity development, and the dual identities sufficiently strong to promote integrative goals and structures? People's visible behaviors and language (i.e., what they do and what they say) are indicators of shifting identity boundaries. For example, patterns of who spends time with whom and symbolic marking of shared intergroup space (Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005) may reflect changing group affiliations. Language, too, serves as a marker, indicating people's representations of themselves and their ingroup (Cheney, 1983; Fiol, 1989). For example, Fiol described how changes in the language at Tech-

Co, a technology company undergoing an identity transformation, revealed the changing identifications of employees with the old "we" and with the new identity the company was assuming, noting that "language can reflect the strength of the relationship between individuals and their social groups" (2002: 663). Leaders can therefore determine the progress in moving through each phase of the process we have described by attending to people's behavioral and linguistic cues.

Next Steps

IICs are highly complex. While we believe that managing identity must play a key role in resolving these conflicts, there are additional issues, beyond the scope of this paper, that must be addressed as research in this area moves forward. For example, some of our arguments have drawn explicitly from research on intractable conflicts—a body of research that, to date, has been concerned largely with conflicts between societal groups (e.g., nations, religious and ethnic groups). We acknowledge that there may be important differences that can impact intergroup relations across diverse settings, as well as the success of proposed approaches for conflict resolution. One obvious difference is group size, which may impact how information is disseminated and processed within and between the subgroups, as well as the types of interactions that are likely. Issues of size also raise issues of scale. That is, how many people from each group need to be involved in the conflict management process in order for the members of the conflicting parties to feel that their needs have been adequately represented (Burgess & Burgess, 2006)? Groups in organizations may also differ from ethnonational groups in their boundary permeability, with some types of groups having memberships that are more permanent or more permeable than others (Mumendey, Klink, Mielke, Wenzel, & Blanz, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, how much more threatening are conflicts based on one's membership in an ethnic group (e.g., Palestinian) versus a professional group (e.g., physician)? Are there differences of membership salience and historical significance, which may make identity conflicts more or less intense? Future research that tests our propositions

should pay special attention to the potential impact of these differences.

We have also very deliberately omitted reference to the impact of relative subgroup status and power in developing our model. Large intergroup status and power asymmetries would likely lead to domination of one group over the other, effectively suppressing the conflict. Although less pronounced status or power differentials are potentially relevant in any of our phases, the specific impact is complex and difficult to predict. Dovidio, Gaertner, and Validzic (1998), for example, conducted a study that manipulated the relative status of groups on the same and different dimensions of their task experience. Equal status between two groups working on the same task produced intergroup bias, but the bias was eliminated when the groups' areas of expertise were distinct and valued. This suggests that the effects of status are not direct but involve other intervening variables. Similarly, Rouhana and Fiske (1995) concluded that although Israelis were perceived by Arab and Jewish students as holding more institutional power (control of tangible elements such as the economy) than Arabs, this was accompanied by a sense of threat rather than security, which was apparently due to the Arabs' greater latent power to determine their own identity and ability to endure. This suggests that determining power asymmetry is also not at all straightforward and cannot easily be related to experiences of intergroup threat. We leave it to future research to flesh out these important power and status dynamics.

Naturally, there is a need to test and refine the model we have proposed. Multiple methods can be used to examine specific hypotheses or the entire model. For example, we make a strong claim that decoupling intergroup identities is critical if attempts to promote positive ingroup distinctiveness are to lead to subgroup identity security (Proposition 3). A strong test of this proposition would be to conduct field experiments where groups facing intractable conflicts in one organization simply received positive messages about their respective groups, while in another organization these positive ingroup messages were coupled with the techniques used by Kelman for intergroup identity decoupling. Subgroup identity security scores in each organization could be compared. A weaker test—one that might miss some of the historical

dynamics of IICs—may involve conducting a laboratory experiment where subjects are recruited based on the results from a screening questionnaire that assesses levels of mutual disidentification with a relevant outgroup (e.g., active liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans in the United States). As in the quasi-field experiments, control groups receiving positive messages about their ingroup can be compared on their subgroup identity scores (controlling for pretest subgroup identity security) with those receiving both positive messages and decoupling interventions.

The entire model can be examined via either static or longitudinal analyses. The former provides information regarding the impact of present levels of each of the variables on predicted model outcomes, whereas the latter provides a test of the implications of altering levels of model variables in a manner consistent with our propositions. Whether we test it statically or longitudinally, we reemphasize that (1) our model proposes sequential phases where all prior states must be achieved and maintained for each moderating variable to have the proposed effect, and (2) this may not always require that the proposed interventions begin with establishing conflict ripeness. In many intractable identity settings, however, we suspect that there is little readiness to rethink long-held identity beliefs, suggesting the need for interventions to begin by establishing conflict ripeness. In such cases interventions guided by our model would need to begin at this earliest phase (see Figure 1) and move through all of the phases presented in our propositions.

A static analysis of our model would entail survey measurement of each of the model variables. One would ideally collect multiple indicators (e.g., different indicators of dual identity strength), each measured along a continuum. Within-group agreement of scores from the individual measures (see Chan's [1998] "dispersion model") could then be used to assess the strength of each state. For example, the greater the proportion of members who perceive their subgroup's identity to be secure across multiple measures, the stronger the group-level construct of subgroup identity security, and, consequently, the stronger the moderating effects of subgroup identity security will be.

The first phase of static testing would involve a regression analysis of the proposed moderat-

ing effects of different levels of ripeness on the relationship between promoting mindfulness and intergroup identity decoupling within the data set. Our model proposes that similar efforts to promote mindfulness will lead to different degrees of identity decoupling, owing to differences in conflict ripeness (see Figure 1). Variance in degree of decoupling allows one to test the moderating effect of intergroup identity decoupling on the relationship between promoting positive ingroup distinctiveness and subgroup identity security. Similarly, differences in the level of identity security in the sample allow a test of the moderating effect of identity security on the relationship between promoting intergroup differentiation/unity and dual identity strength. Finally, one would test the moderating effect of dual identity strength on the relationship between promoting integrative goals/structures and intergroup harmony.

The truest test of our model would be a longitudinal approach that followed how conflicting groups evolve over time through the sequential phases of the model. One way to assess this aspect of our model would be to conduct multimethod, multiple-site, longitudinal case studies. The test would start with a single case, ideally in an organization where parties in identity conflict are in a state of readiness but not mindfulness (the conditions for readiness having already been shown in extant research). Researchers would then begin by promoting mindfulness and assessing its influence on all of the other states in our model (e.g., decoupled intergroup identities, subgroup identity security, dual identity strength, etc.). Such assessments should involve the use of multiple data sources, such as interviews, surveys, and documents. At "Time 2" researchers would continue the first intervention in order to maintain the state moderating the subsequent stage of the model (e.g., decoupled intergroup identities), in addition to the next proposed intervention (e.g., promoting positive ingroup distinctiveness), in order to determine their joint effects. Once again, researchers would examine the effects of these interventions on all of the states in our model. Such assessments would continue to follow subsequent sets of interventions outlined in our model, ending with an examination of all interventions on the impact of promoting integrative goals/structures (see Figure 1). Throughout this process, researchers would incorporate pattern-matching techniques (Yin, 2003) whereby they

would compare the empirically based pattern with a predicted one—that is, the results of the interventions with our predicted results.

After conducting this initial case analysis, researchers should pursue two types of cases. First, some cases should involve organizations facing conditions similar to those in the initial case study (e.g., in a state of intractable conflict) in order to see whether results can be *replicated*. Second, some cases should be *contrasting* (e.g., in a similar type of organization where there is no intractable conflict) to see if the absence of intractable conflict can also be predicted by our model (e.g., dual identities are present, identities are secure, etc.). These subsequent cases could be used to confirm or refine our model (Lindesmith, 1947; Yan & Gray, 1994). While the use of case analyses to test theory is not common in organizational research, it is not without precedent. For example, Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fireman (1996) used a multiple case study design to conduct the first test of their unfolding model of voluntary turnover.

The measures and intervention techniques needed to test our model already exist. For example, to assess our states (the shaded boxes in Figure 1), several existing measures can be used. Indices of intergroup harmony have been developed (e.g., Banker & Gaertner, 1998). Strength of dual identities can also be ascertained using existing identification measures (e.g., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), and Huo and Molina's (2006) measure of subgroup respect can be adapted to approximate subgroup identity security. Kreiner and Ashforth's (2004) disidentification scale can be adapted to examine mutual disidentification—the opposite of decoupled intergroup identities—with the target of disidentification being the opposing group (e.g., "I would be embarrassed to be part of (add competing subgroup's name)"). Finally, measures of conflict ripeness have already been developed (Coleman, 2000).

The IIC resolution model's interventions (the ovals in Figure 1) can also be adapted from existing practices. For example, techniques for promoting mindfulness have been developed (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Interventions to build positive subgroup distinctiveness as well as to promote simultaneous intergroup differentiation and unity can draw on Cheney's (1983) rhetorical techniques (e.g., using "we" when talking about group members at the relevant level).

And, finally, numerous techniques have been proposed for promoting integrative goals and structures (e.g., creating superordinate goals).

To conclude, the repercussions of IIC have long been known on the international stage. According to Coleman (2003), nearly one-sixth of the world's population is engaged in or on the verge of engaging in identity-based conflicts. And in a recent review of the literature, Burgess and Burgess referred to intractable conflict as, "arguably, the most destructive force on the planet" (2006: 183). However, researchers in organizational studies are only recently converging on the role of identity in protracted organizational conflicts and are only beginning to assess the damage that can ensue from them. As professional organizations continue to take on administrative layers, as nonprofessional organizations increasingly depend on professionals, and as organizations globalize and become more diverse, we believe that a focus on managing IICs is long overdue.

During off-site retreat sessions, tensions between physicians and administrators at the community hospital were temporarily reduced through a series of exercises that created readiness to at least consider possibilities beyond all-out warfare. Attempting to capitalize on this initial ripeness, the retreat leaders initiated three short-term projects jointly sponsored by at least one physician and one administrator that appeared to have recognizable, measurable benefits for both groups. The involved physicians and administrators agreed that they would return to this larger retreat group within a few weeks to report their outcomes (hopefully demonstrating that they could work together effectively), thereby providing the foundation for the follow-up work that was recommended by the consultants. However, the follow-up work to decouple the intergroup identities, enhance subgroup security, and develop identity strength within both physician and administrator groups never occurred.

While recognition of their mutual interdependence gained during the retreat and follow-up projects led to somewhat reduced conflict in the short run, agreement regarding larger initiatives was never reached. Tensions continued to build to the point where the CEO contacted one of the consultants, requesting that he return and again disarm the conflict that was once more threatening her job. She explained that she had seen no

need to do the intermediate steps he had recommended and had, instead, immediately initiated conversations about creating a common agreement among all involved as the basis for reducing the intergroup conflict (according to our model, moving from readiness directly to promoting integrative goals). The consultant declined to work further with this organization (O'Connor, personal communication).

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