

Our ingroup memberships can contribute either positive or negative aspects to our social identities. We tend to maintain positive identities associated with our ingroups by evaluating our ingroups positively when we compare them with outgroups (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This leads to an ingroup bias.

One consequence of the ingroup bias is that discriminating against outgroup members increases ingroup members' self-esteem (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998).

The ingroup bias is the major consequence of dividing people into ingroups and outgroups. There are, nevertheless, other consequences of dividing people into members of ingroups and outgroups. First, we have a tendency to expect members of our ingroups to behave and think similarly to the way we do (Tajfel, 1969). Second, individualists tend to perceive outgroups as relatively homogeneous and see more variability in their ingroups than outgroups (Tajfel, 1969). Third, we have less anxiety about interacting with members of our ingroups than about interacting with members of outgroups (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Fourth, we tend to be more accurate in predicting the behavior of members of our ingroups than we are in predicting the behavior of members of outgroups (Gudykunst, 1995).

Once we become aware of belonging to one or more ingroup, our social identities begin to form. *Social identities* are those parts of an "individual's self-concept which derive from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Our social identities can be based on our memberships in demographic categories (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, social class), the roles we play (e.g., student, professor, parent), our memberships in formal or informal organizations (e.g., political parties, social clubs), our associations or vocations (e.g., scientist, artist, gardener), or our memberships in stigmatized groups (e.g., homeless, people with AIDS). The degree to which we assert our social identities varies from situation to situation, but the general degree to which we identify with particular groups appears to remain relatively stable over time. You isolated many of the social identities important to you in Chapter 1 when you completed the sentence "I am a(an)."

Our social identities emerge from the tension between our need to be seen as similar to and fit in with others, and our need to be seen as unique (Brewer, 1991). Our need to be seen as similar allows us to identify with different groups and involves the general process of inclusion. Our need to be seen as unique is based on the general process of differentiation, or making ourselves stand out from others.

From Gudykunst, W.B. *Bridging Differences. Effective Intergroup Communication*. 4th edition, London: Sage Publications, 2004, p. 76-77.