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Identity, bargaining, and third-party mediation

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This paper elucidates a theory of identity formation and applies it to the study of international negotiation. The theory acknowledges that actors/agents can adopt a multiplicity of identities, and it treats changes in the salience of identities as endogenous to the contextually dependent processes of interpersonal and intergroup interactions. Typically, strong identities are viewed as encouraging conflict and exacerbating interstate disputes. Our theory, however, suggests a palliative role for identity: third-party mediation can more effectively *resolve* conflicts when it enhances shared, if initially less salient, aspects of the disputants' identities. We discuss several causal pathways through which the process of enhancing identity salience can increase the likelihood of successful conflict resolution, providing a complementary mechanism for the effectiveness of mediation to those extant in the literature. The paper concludes with a practical method for applying the theory's insights to the choice of mediator and the mediator's technique.

Keywords: identity formation; salience of identity; conflict mediation; conflict resolution

Whether or not one believes that Huntington's (1996) 'clash of civilizations' obtains, there is substantial evidence that identity cleavages alter conflict behavior via increased ease of mobilization (e.g. Horowitz 1985; Reynal-Querol 2002; Buhaug, Cederman and Rød 2008), even if ethnic or religious cleavages are not themselves the cause of the conflict in all cases (Fearon and Laitin 2003). The argument is typically given as follows. Salient identity differences between parties aid each in defining an 'other', an out-group who, by virtue of these differences, may succumb to any number of negative attributions.[1] When grievance is laid atop strong self/other distinctions,

[1] See Hewstone *et al.* (2002) and Brewer (1999) for a review of the research on in-group/out-group bias; Goldgeier and Tetlock (2001), Herrmann *et al.* (1997), and McDermott (2004) offer useful applications of these ideas to international relations.

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conflict may arise or be perpetuated with little effort. This is said to be true for Huntington's civilizations, for the participants in ethnic conflict and civil wars (e.g. Sambanis 2001), and even for disputant states that only differ in identity beyond the majority group (Gartzke and Gleditsch 2006).

Resolving conflict in such a context can be difficult, as identity cleavages become proxies for more easily resolved substantive disagreements that inspire rational and emotional reactions (Petersen 2001, 2002, 2011; Long and Brecke 2003). Third-party mediation, which consists of content- and process-related strategies designed to alter the substantive and perceptual dimensions of the dispute (e.g. Bercovitch 1992; Princen 1992; Wall and Lynn 1993; Dixon 1996; Mitchell 2002; Allee and Huth 2006; Beardsley *et al*. 2006; Regan and Aydin 2006; Greig and Regan 2008), may be one productive approach to overcoming the problems stemming from identity cleavages. While there is abundant scholarship probing the efficacy of mediation in both the long and the short term (e.g. Wehr 1979; Karim and Pegnetter 1983; Dixon 1996; Kydd 2003, 2006; Beardsley *et al*. 2006; Rauchhaus 2006; Beardsley 2008; Savun 2008), research on the active use of identity in mediation is far less developed. Though the identity of the mediator is a consideration, discussion of identity largely revolves around such large-scale, static factors as the nature of the state (e.g. superpower, neighboring country) or the international organization (e.g. the United Nations (UN)) performing the mediation (e.g. Bercovitch and DeRouen 2005), or the resources these parties can bring to bear (e.g. Bercovitch and Gartner 2006). In those cases in which the analyst goes further, explicitly testing the role of shared history or culture on the choice of mediation or its outcomes (e.g. Bercovitch and Elgström 2001; Greig and Regan 2008; Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana 2009), identity is a fixed combination of ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, or other markers that characterize an individual, group, or state.

Yet such conceptualizations contradict the psychological literature on the salience of identity: the process whereby a linguistic difference like the Basque language becomes a rallying cry for resistance across decades, or a religious difference like the Sunni/Shi'ite split evolves to supersede among a segment of the population, the nationalist split of Iraq/Iran.[2] We propose a theory of identity formation that treats changes of salience over time and across circumstances as *endogenous to the process of interpersonal and*

[2] For studies demonstrating how heightened identity salience can affect attitudes and behaviors more generally, see: Abrams (1994), Giles and Johnson (1987), Hinkle and Brown (1990), Hogg (1992), and Turner *et al*. (1987). The literature on 'negotiating identity' (see Zartman 2001 for a brief but lucid introduction) considers identity in a similarly fluid light, but in a different context. Further, in our model a salient identity cleavage need not be resolved to end conflict.

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intergroup interaction. If multiple aspects of identity for some actors are potentially salient – for example Sunni, Shi'ite, and Iraqi/Iranian – the theory implies that the salience of each aspect can change over time, possibly independently from all other aspects, depending on the context of the actor's interactions. This can occur due to long-term socialization, or due to deliberate and repeated seeking of better outcomes from the interactions. For example, the salience of one's Sunni identity could increase as a result of continuous exposure to Sunni norms and customs, or as a result of a repeated desire to ingratiate oneself in order to obtain better results from business deals.

Actors that share salient identity aspects share (to an extent) norms, customs, and perceptions of the world. This can enhance trust, improve the 'signal-to-noise' ratio of discussion, and reduce perceived divergence of preferences or perceived bias in information. Each of these can affect the status of conflict negotiations, either directly or via external pressure, decreasing the difficulty of achieving a successful resolution.[3] Unfortunately, conflict hinders the identification of shared identity aspects between disputants. Even if there were no prior identity cleavages separating parties in a conflict, the conflict itself is likely to have triggered a strong self/other distinction that makes common ground difficult to perceive. However, as identity salience is endogenous, carefully chosen third-party mediators may be able to foment shifts in the salience of shared identity aspects, even without explicitly diminishing the still-salient identity cleavage developed over the course of the conflict. By successfully making this particular 'identity play', the mediator is able to exploit the benefits of shared identity, and becomes more likely to bring the conflict to a successful resolution. Therefore, enhancing the shared identity aspects of disputants provides a novel mechanism for improving the effectiveness of mediation that complements those discussed in the literature, and the causal pathways underlying the technique fit well into the literatures on process-related strategies (Bercovitch and Houston 2000) and on information and bias (Kydd 2003, 2006; Rauchhaus 2006).

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. In the second section, we present a theory of the impact of shared identity on bargaining situations that focuses on the role of identity salience (e.g. Posner 2005) and draws from the behavioral game theoretical literature on identity (e.g. Akerlof and Kranton 2000; Dickson and Scheve 2006; Penn 2008). In the third section, we apply this abstract argument explicitly to conflict resolution in order to detail three causal pathways by which shared

[3] In a similar vein, Bercovitch and Elgström (2001) and Carnevale and Choi (2000) find that a common culture leads to more successful mediation.

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identity can improve the likelihood of successful conflict resolution: by enhancing *trust*, cultivating perceptions of *commonality*, and improving *communication* between disputants. In the fourth section, we allow the salience of actors' identities to be endogenous via a process of interpersonal and intergroup interactions characterized by positive feedbacks. In the fifth section, we apply this theory to suggest a novel and beneficial role of mediators: enhancing the salience of a shared identity aspect. We offer suggestions for a mediator attempting to make such an identity play, and provide a procedure for choosing an optimal mediator to do so. The last section contains the concluding remarks.

Shared identity and bargaining outcomes

The literature on conflict resolution and bargaining draws heavily on the rationalist bargaining framework in which parties in conflict proffer settlement offers that may be accepted, resolving the conflict at least temporarily, or rejected, leading either to war or to continued opportunities to make offers. Offers are derived in equilibrium from the preferences of the parties, the outside options and/or cost of war, and, usually, the timing of the offers made. Each of these may be common knowledge among the parties or may be uncertain, although typically the nature of the uncertainty (i.e. the distributions from which the relevant parameters are drawn) is common knowledge even when the parties' preferences are not.

As should be apparent from this exceedingly brief summary of the rationalist bargaining model (see Powell 2002 for a review of this literature), there is nothing explicitly prohibiting the incorporation of identity. Yet, until recently, identity played little role in most rationalist accounts, including bargaining. Partially as a consequence of this, the literature on bargaining and conflict resolution has, for the most part, treated identity fairly superficially, as we noted in the introduction. To rectify this, we develop a theory of the use of identity in conflict resolution in two parts. In this section, we describe the effect of static identities on bargaining outcomes; in the fourth section, we make actors' identities endogenous. Splitting the development of the theory in this manner allows us to make clear first the incentives for identity manipulation, and second the manner by which these incentives might be obtained by a skilled mediator. The current section also serves as a self-contained theory of the role of identity in bargaining, though this is not the main focus of the paper.

Our theory draws on several lines of research, all of which utilize a fluid conceptualization of identity. A broad and growing literature across political science, one stemming indirectly from the psychological foundations of social identity theory (SIT), assumes that individuals may choose

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to manifest the aspect of their identity most beneficial to them. That is to say, not only can the salience of identity vary by context, as in SIT, but salience itself becomes a choice variable. A subset of this scholarship, deriving insights from game theory and behavioral game theory, formalizes the incentives leading to and benefits gained from identity choice. Like Dickson and Scheve (2006), Penn (2008), Shayo (2010) and others, we detail the effect of identity in a rationalist framework, in our case focusing on the role of shared identity in altering bargaining outcomes.[4]

We begin by defining what we mean formally by identity, choosing a conceptualization that relies on the extensive literature on identity salience (for reviews, see Monroe, Hankin, and Van Vechten 2000; Kurzban 2003; Michalski and Helmig 2008; Stryker 2008). Our theory shares with this literature the assumptions that specific identities can be made salient at certain times and under certain circumstances, and that such contextually activated identities can have predictable consequences for behavior. Specifically, we assume that there are numerous identity aspects or dimensions (hereafter called 'IDs') along which actors may identify themselves and that actors may choose which IDs are most salient to them at any given time, though constrained by their own self-concepts. For example, an individual might view it as beneficial to emphasize linguistic similarities in one instance and religious similarities in another (see Posner 2005). The idea that actors can vary the salience of multiple aspects of their identity is not novel (in fact, it is a central tenet of identity theory and SIT; see Stets and Burke (2000) for a review of the key concepts in both literatures, as well as linkages between them). However, we depart from (and contribute to) this literature by allowing for more fluid specifications of identity while addressing the complications that arise from deliberately chosen identity manifestations.

Formally, we assume that each actor's identity is defined by a vector of weights between zero and one assigned to each element of the set of all possible IDs.[5] IDs with non-zero weights are associated with aspects of an

[4] While it is true that we articulate our theory within a rational choice framework, our decision to do so should not be misconstrued as a sign that we are implicitly privileging rationality over emotion. We acknowledge the importance of the effective foundations of identity formation, identity change, and identity cleavages (see Nair 2008 for a comprehensive review), and there is nothing about our theory that precludes us from considering the widely documented connection between emotions and conflict.

[5] Our notion of identity vectors is conceptually similar to what psychologists refer to as an individual's self-concept, defined as an individual's awareness of self. The elements within an identity vector are analogous to the information comprising an individual's self-concept. The weights in the identity vector need not be consciously known, even as actors attempt to augment them strategically (in the dynamic theory of the fourth section).

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actor's identity; IDs with weights of zero, which will be the overwhelming majority if the set of all possible IDs is large, are those completely absent from one's self-concept. In this framework, which is similar to that of Shayo (2010),[6] we do not categorize types of identity (e.g. ethnic or linguistic), unlike many models of identity choice (see, e.g. Posner 2005). Instead, each potential aspect of identity (such as Spanish speaker or practitioner of Sunni Islam) is its own dimension. The weights on the aspects need not add to one, and may in fact be completely uncorrelated with each other. For example, assume that there are only four possible aspects of identity in the world: *Sunni, Shi'ite, Iraqi*, and *merchant*. In this simple example, each person's identity looks like this: *(a, b, c, d)*, where *a* is the weight on the *Sunni* ID, *b* is the weight on the *Shi'ite* ID, *c* is the weight on the *Iraqi* ID, and *d* is the weight on the *merchant* ID. The first two, *a* and *b*, are likely to be strongly and negatively correlated regardless of the political context at that moment. The third, *c*, may or may not be positively correlated with one of *a* or *b*, depending on the distribution of each religion in the country. The fourth might be weakly or not at all correlated with either of the previous three.

Our formalization allows individuals to have any values of *a, b, c,* and *d* between 0 and 1. As previously stated, 0 and 1 define the extremes: the identity vector of a person who is solely a *Sunni* would be *(1, 0, 0, 0)*, while the vector of a person who is wholly a *Shi'ite* would be *(0, 1, 0, 0)*. Note that an actor can be extreme in multiple dimensions at once. Someone with the identity vector *(1, 0, 1, 1)* would identify maximally as a *Sunni Iraqi merchant*. These extremes typify common characterizations of SIT: individuals automatically (often unconsciously) divide themselves and others into 'in-groups' (comprising people with like identities) and 'out-groups' (whose members share identities that differ from, or even oppose, those of the in-group), and tend to favor the group with which they identify (Kramer and Brewer 1984; De Cremer and Van Vugt 1999; Huddy 2004). While accurate in many circumstances, such characterizations betray an oversimplified view of identity expression, for even seemingly static racial identities may be affected by context (for historical discussions of the malleability of racial designations, see Smedley in Stokes *et al.* 2001; Nobles 2000, chap. 1 and 2). In our example, an immigrant to the United States from a formerly mixed part of Baghdad might have an identity vector that looks like *(0.7, 0.2, 0.8, 0.5)* if she, though Sunni, on occasion

[6] Like Shayo (2010), we assume that an actor may have a continuously varying degree of attachment to any group. However, we differ in our interpretation of these levels of attachment: we are more interested in capturing the distance from the idealization of a particular identity aspect than from a social group, which may have characteristics spanning multiple aspects.

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attended Shi'ite services with friends while growing up, was strongly nationalistic, and, while not a merchant herself, was the child of one.

Explicit in this example is the notion of *identity change* – although she remains the same person, our example Iraqi found her identity changing upon exposure to alternative religious practices. How does this change occur? We draw on the extensive literature on identity salience in postulating that identity changes endogenously via repeated social interactions. One might think of this in sociological terms – the more time one spends within a group, the more one identifies with that group (see, e.g. Aronson 2008) – or the process can be an affective one, as described by Smith (1999), in the sense that an actor's emotional well-being is enhanced by group membership. Alternatively, one could think of this as the natural outcome of repeated rational interactions: if there is a benefit to being a member of a certain group (in terms of improved transactions with members of that group), then frequent transactions with a specific group will induce a rational actor to strengthen her in-group affiliation. We discuss this further in the fourth section . For our purposes now, it suffices that the core of the theory is that interacting with others who manifest similar aspects of identity leads to an increase in the weights that one assigns to those identity aspects. On the basis of this logic, we would expect that if we visited our Iraqi immigrant again several years later, she would place a higher weight on the *Iraqi* ID if she had located in an enclave strongly devoted to the maintenance of Iraqi culture than if she had instead chosen to reside in a more ethnically mixed area. We would also expect this trend to increase the more time this living arrangement held.

Because of the importance of social interaction in the formation of identity, individuals cannot freely select a desired identity. A politician might suggest that he would be an effective advocate for a particular racial or ethnic minority, but he will have difficulty claiming his in-group status if his history does not support his alleged affiliation. Continuing our example, our Iraqi immigrant would have an easier time evoking a feeling of commonality with other Sunnis than a wholly secular politician who happened to be born into a Sunni family, despite both nominally having the same religious affiliation. If the politician were sufficiently clumsy in his appeals, he might even suffer a penalty for making the attempt, as those to whom he was professing similarity might come to view him not only as inauthentic, but also as a dissembler.

This leads naturally to the role that identity plays in influencing outcomes. Our discussion of contextually determined identity, helpful in capturing real-world nuance, presents problems here. While an in-group/out-group duality allows for straightforward payoff comparisons in most situations – payoffs to outcomes are higher when individuals interact with

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members of their own group than when they interact with those who are outside of their group – now the translation between identity and outcomes is less clearly defined. To overcome this challenge, we focus on the deliberate manifestation of an ID. By manifesting an ID, we merely mean expressing a particular aspect or dimension of one's identity at a given time and in a given context (see Tajfel (1982a) for a similar working definition). In the example of the previous paragraph, the politician was attempting to manifest the *Sunni* aspect of his identity.

Manifestation of an ID within this theory is a conscious choice, made after considering the situation. Consistent with rationalist theories of identity choice, we assume that identity manifestations can entail behavioral prescriptions and have social consequences that affect one's utility (Posner 2005; Dickson and Scheve 2006; Penn 2008; Shayo 2010).[7] Successfully manifesting the same identity aspects as those of the others with whom one interacts can improve the outcome of one's interactions, while unsuccessfully doing so can make the outcome worse. What 'improve' and 'worse' mean depend on the context; we discuss their import in bargaining shortly. First, we must flesh out manifestation further. We assume that the attempt of manifestation is costly in time, effort, and the potential resources spent in attempting to 'pass' as that ID. Further, we assume that the probability of manifesting an identity aspect successfully is increasing in the weight on the ID, while the cost of manifestation is decreasing in the weight. Put differently, it is easier to convince others that you are of a certain group – to 'pass' as a member of that group – the more a part of that group you truly are. At one extreme, an actor with a weight of 1 on an ID would pay little to no cost to manifest it, and suffer almost no chance of failure; the ID is fundamental to the actor's self-concept, and this is clear to all with whom the actor comes into contact. At the other extreme, an actor with a weight of 0 on an ID would pay a large cost to manifest it, and would most likely fail because the ID is so far outside the actor's experience as to almost preclude successful passing. All IDs to which an actor has never been exposed fall into this latter extreme.

As an example, assume that our Sunni politician was trying to reach a compromise deal among a group of people who all strongly identify as Sunni.

[7] Our focus on the rational choice of manifesting an ID to achieve some expected gain should not be taken to preclude less rational manifestations, which are consistent with our concept of identity if not necessarily of optimal behavior. The literature surrounding SIT demonstrates that identities can be made salient, and therefore affect choices, even when there is no rational basis for expecting advantage. For example, Tajfel's early experiments showed that subjects tended to privilege others who were 'like them' in some trivial manner regardless of whether such in-group favoritism yielded monetary gain (see Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1982a, 1982b).

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Since manifesting a Sunni identity aspect would improve each interaction between the politician and members of the Sunni group, doing so might also improve the chances of coming to a successful deal. Let us assume that the politician's weight on his *Sunni* ID is *0.3* before meeting with the group, and that the probability of a successful manifestation is exactly equal to the weight on that ID.[8] Then there is a 30% chance of manifesting successfully, which would net the politician the benefit from doing so, but a 70% chance of unsuccessfully manifesting the *Sunni* ID, which would garner the politician a penalty. In deciding whether or not to make the attempt at manifestation, the politician must determine whether the expected payoff from this lottery over outcomes exceeds the cost of manifestation. If it does, then the politician should make the attempt, even though it might fail. If it does not, he should rely upon other means to broker this deal.[9]

The role of the ID weight is important in this example. Were the politician to have a weight of 1 on the *Sunni* ID, he could manifest it with relative ease if he so decided. After all, it would be near costless to do so, and the attempts would almost always be successful. In contrast, a weight of 0 would leave the politician without manifestation as a valid option, since it would most likely fail, and the attempt would be costly as well. The 0.3 value we chose for the example, between these two extremes of 0 (no weight on a given ID) and 1 (highest ID weight), introduces uncertainty. The attempt might succeed, but it might fail. We expect this to be the norm, and thus believe that manifesting an aspect of one's identity is a risky action in nearly all cases. Formally, even the simplest scenario in which manifesting an ID is an option produces an expected utility calculation: an actor chooses to manifest an ID if $P(\text{success}) \times \text{Benefit} + (1 - P(\text{success})) \times \text{Penalty} > \text{Cost}$.

What about for the more complex scenario of bilateral bargaining? The standard rationalist (bilateral) bargaining model provides a useful guide. Leaving out the shadow of the future, there are three common relevant factors that affect the manner in which actors bargain under uncertainty.

[8] This need not be the case. One might imagine a logistic form for this success probability, with very little chance of success for all low values of the weight on an ID, very likely success for all high values, and most of the variation occurring for middling values of the weight. All our theory requires is that the function that translates the weight to the probability of success is increasing in the weight. The same is true for the inverse of the cost function – cost must be decreasing in the weight down to zero at a weight of 1.

[9] Of course, he has an electoral incentive for trying to broker the deal. If he fails, then there is the opportunity for someone like our Iraqi immigrant to get into politics herself and garner the benefits of completing the deal. After all, by this logic, she has a 70% chance of successfully manifesting her *Sunni* ID, more than twice that of the politician.

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The first is their preferences over outcomes, as formally represented by their (expected) utility functions. Should an actor's preferences change to align more closely with the other actor's preferences, the actor's offers would change and a resolution would become more likely. The second factor is the actors' beliefs about the opposing actors' preferences, typically represented formally by having one actor uncertain of the type of the other actor. Should an actor's beliefs over the distribution of types of the second actor shift toward types that have preferences more closely aligned with the first actor, the first actor would be more likely to make an offer designed to produce a resolution to the conflict. This is important for two reasons. One, should the second actor's preferences actually be altered, in line with the first factor, this shift in beliefs would make an actual resolution more likely as well. Two, experimental evidence suggests that actors may form overly critical assessments of the other actors in a bargaining scenario (Dickson 2009); altering actors' beliefs would directly counteract this effect. Finally, along these lines, the third factor is the quality of information revealed during the negotiation. Should the quality of information revealed during the bargaining process improve, information revelation is more likely to reduce uncertainty, diminishing the likelihood of (continued) conflict (Fearon 1995).

We postulate that the identities that the actors manifest during bargaining alter all three of the aforementioned factors (preferences over outcomes, beliefs about opponents' preferences, and information quality), and we detail one specific manifestation outcome in the next section: the manner in which a signal of shared identity – that is, both actors successfully manifest a common ID – aids in conflict resolution, as suggested in the previous paragraph. Before doing so, however, it is important to unpack who the actors in our theory are meant to represent.

We have deliberately used the vague term 'actors' in this section as the theory presented thus far does not specify the nature of those engaging in the bargaining process. Although it is perhaps most natural to think of identity on the individual level, the logic in this section goes through equally well in the case of states. The large literature on state identity (e.g. Campbell 1992; Hopf 2002; Mattern 2005; Rieker 2006; Rousseau 2006; Abdelal *et al*. 2009; Risse 2010; see also Mitzen 2006 for a similar aggregation argument) provides one way forward. Just as one may aggregate individual-level identity upward, so may we aggregate individual-level identity weights to the state level to produce an identity vector for the state.[10] Some care must

[10] Aggregating individual characteristics to obtain a meaningful collective outcome is common in, for example, the research on macro-partisanship and policy mood. Stimson (2004) offers a useful essay on the topic of aggregation of public opinion.

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be taken in this process, of course; if a particular ethnic group is prohibited from affecting state policy or state leadership going forward, presumably the identity weights it contributes to state identity have far less of an effect on the bargaining process than those associated with the dominant ethnic group. Further, one must assume that states behave as unitary actors during the bargaining process, although this is common in formal models of bargaining.

We must be more circumspect, however, in our definition of 'actor' when making identity weights endogenous in the fourth section. As the primary mechanism for altering identity weights we propose is social, it is far less clear how to aggregate up to the state level. While we do briefly suggest how this may be done at the end of that section, we choose instead to focus on individual-level actors in the fourth and fifth sections. In addition to eliding the practical problems with aggregation, we believe that this is a more appropriate assumption in modeling mediation. Fundamentally, mediation is an elite-driven process in which one or more third-party mediators interact repeatedly on a personal level with appointed representatives of the bargaining parties. Treating the actors as individuals better captures this dynamic.[11]

Shared identity and conflict resolution

We now apply our theory of identity in bargaining to the specific case of shared identity in conflict resolution. International negotiations are not simple, and they often involve bargaining over several dimensions at once. Uncertainty is prevalent in perceptions of the preferences and the capabilities of both sides, external pressure to resolve a conflict may be lacking, and trust may be in short supply between disputants. Strong identity cleavages, of the type likely to arise due to in-group/out-group dynamics during conflict or the strategic behavior of actors looking for stronger bargaining positions, can exacerbate these problems. However, the converse of this is also true: shared identity aspects can mitigate the same problems, improving the likelihood of successful resolution. In this section, we detail several causal pathways by which this may happen. We keep the discussion general, tying it to mediation and the associated literature in the fifth section.

[11] This approach does ignore potential problems with ratifying bargains reached by elites. On one level, we do not believe this to be much of a problem for the theory, as it seems likely that increasing the number of elite bargains reached would not decrease the number of bargains ratified over the counterfactual of fewer elite bargains reached; in other words, we expect that elite bargains reached and bargains ratified both move in the same direction. Despite this, we do also offer suggestions in the fourth section as to how identity plays may be transmitted via the media to help encourage ratification.

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As discussed in the previous section, the more salient an identity aspect is, the more an actor is able to manifest it successfully. If it were also true that an actor's successful manifestation of an ID was associated with superior outcomes when this ID was salient for the other actor, then rational actors, like those posited in the typical bargaining model, would frequently choose to manifest salient, shared IDs. After all, doing so would, with a high probability, garner both actors better outcomes.[12] Thus, in this case, negotiations in the presence of a shared ID that is salient to both sides would be accompanied by frequent manifestations of this ID, assuming both actors were aware of this commonality. This in turn would lead to an increased chance of a successful conflict resolution, as we discussed briefly at the end of the previous section. We go into further detail on this point below. To achieve this beneficial outcome, however, we first must justify the missing assumption, and specify what lies behind the association of shared ID manifestation with superior outcomes.

We propose three fundamental, closely related causal mechanisms inspired by the social psychological literature and directly connected to the precise mechanisms outlined in the last section with respect to the standard bargaining model; these mechanisms in turn imply others more closely tied to the political science literature on negotiations. The first mechanism is an increase in trust between the negotiating parties. Manifestations of shared identity can signal cultural sameness, which leads not only to an association of the other party with oneself, but also to an increased belief that the manifesting party shares one's own positive characteristics, such as integrity or character (see Otten and Moskowitz 2000; Otten and Wentura 2001). Those that share such positive characteristics are believed to be more likely to enter into negotiations in good faith and less likely to renege when it comes time to implement an agreement.[13] The second is an increase in an actor's belief

[12] Though we frame this in terms of a rational choice approach, a similar argument could be made relying instead on the socialization argument we put forth in the fourth section: highly salient IDs are most strongly attached to an individual's identity, and, consequently, they are most likely to be manifested in social interactions. Of course, there may be scenarios in which actors would find it beneficial to manifest different or even divergent IDs, such as when their incentives for intransigence in bargaining exceed the perceived cost of a possible breakdown of bargaining. Our theory is completely compatible with such situations. Further, mediators may be of even more use in scenarios in which the actors are intent upon maintaining strong identity cleavages throughout the bargaining process.

[13] We eschew formal precision in our discussion of the mechanism of trust, allowing instead for the gradations of meaning present in the social psychological literature. Instead, in what follows we tie trust to precise mechanisms in the standard bargaining model. However, our concept of trust is consonant with more formal definitions (cf. Kydd 2006).

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of commonality. Expressions of common identity suggest common purpose and shared intent, and the notion of 'common fate' is widely documented in studies of racial and ethnic group politics (Dawson 1994, 2001; Stokes-Brown 2003, 2006; Sanchez 2006, 2008; Junn 2008; for a review, see McClain *et al*. 2009). Finally, the third is an improvement in communication between the actors. Research on SIT (particularly, Turner 1985) mentions information quality as a mechanism for group identification: people tend to have more information about members of their in-group than they do about folks in the out-group, and this explains in-group bias. Manifestation by nature is performed in the common cultural idiom – or even the same language – of the ID, an idiom well understood by actors with high salience on that identity aspect (see Estes 1994; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). It stands to reason that communications accompanying manifestation are thus more likely to be understood, particularly because shared identity facilitates the transmittal of information across actors (see Wilder 1981; Park and Rothbart 1982; van Bavel, Parker and Cunningham 2008).

The combination of improved trust, commonality, and communication has numerous secondary effects depending on the context. Although it is not necessary, it is helpful to view the role of shared identity in conflict negotiations through the lens of bargaining theory. In this context, improvements in trust, commonality, and communication affect three distinct aspects of actors' bargaining as discussed in the previous section: their preferences over outcomes, their beliefs about the opposing actors' preferences, and the quality of information revealed during the negotiation.

Although this point is general, it aids in understanding to explore it in the context of a specific empirical example. Consider the century-old dispute between Argentina and Chile over the Beagle Channel (a strait separating the islands of the Tierra del Fuego). Previous attempts (in 1908, 1966, and 1977) by the British Crown to resolve this conflict were ineffective; in the case of 1978, England's involvement actually worsened the conflict between these South American countries (see Laudy 2000; Corbacho 2008). In response to these failed settlement attempts, particularly the 180-day negotiations of the previous year, Pope John Paul II sent a personal message to the (then) president of Buenos Aires (Raúl Alfonsín) and General of Santiago (Augusto Pinochet) urging a peaceful solution. Both countries allowed the Roman Pontiff to mediate the dispute through the good offices of Cardinal Antonio Samoré, his special emissary. The resulting 1982 resolution (known as the Treaty of Peace and Friendship) granted the islands to Chile while giving many of the maritime rights to Argentina (see Parish 2006 for details). Why might this mediation have succeeded where previous attempts at settlement failed?

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We start by considering the actors' own preferences.[14] As noted in the previous section, a negotiation becomes more likely to yield a mutually beneficial settlement the closer are the actors' preferences. Thus, any factor that shifts the preferences of the actors toward each other can help enable conflict resolution. Certainly, such shifts can occur for reasons unrelated to identity. For example, the Vatican may have succeeded in part because of the duration of the conflict: both Chile and Argentina may have simply wanted the dispute over the Beagle Channel to end sufficiently greatly so as to overcome opposing interests. In other words, past failures may have nurtured Argentina's and Chile's desire for resolution for its own sake.

Increases in both trust and perceptions of commonality arising from manifestations of a shared ID can also affect an actor's preferences, in one of two ways. First, recent research on 'group-based' self-regulation shows that a more positive view of others can decrease one's desire to have members of the out-group do less well (see Abrams 1994; Otten, Mummendey and Blanz 1996; Sassenberg, Kessler and Mummendey 2003). If demonization of the 'other' results in an increased utility benefit for doing well at the expense of one's opponent, then increased trust reduces the size of this utility benefit, so that it has less effect on the equilibrium bargain, widening the bargaining zone. Second, the increase in trust may be felt as well by other aligned actors, who may then increase external pressure to come to a resolution. If one derives utility from the support of other aligned actors, then this too will increase the probability of a successful resolution to the conflict.

While the exact terms of the Beagle Channel resolution are not publicly available, it seems clear that Pope John Paul II appealed to the Christian sensibilities of the claimants, using an identity-based approach. Catholicism is the national religion of both nations, and this shared religious identity, if made salient in the context of the negotiations, could have played an important role in resolving the Beagle Channel conflict (see Laudy 2000, 293; for a more general discussion of the usefulness of faith-based mediators in conflict resolution, see Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana 2009), in part by enhancing trust. This approach highlights commonality and spurs external pressure. In this case, the Pope's envoy, Samoré, mobilized domestic support for the peace plan, which in turn pressured Argentinean and Chilean military leaders to compromise (Garrett 1985; Parish 2006; Corbacho 2008). Furthermore, the emissary's involvement allowed the representatives of these nations to 'save face,' for they found it

[14] Actor here can refer either to the unitary state engaging in bargaining, or the representatives of that state designated to engage in bargaining.

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easier to make concessions proposed by a neutral arbitrator than to signal weakness by giving in to demands made by the other side bilaterally (see Laudy 2000, 293; Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana 2009). External pressure, like increased trust, can change each party's utility from a settlement. Note that disputants may deliberately seek mediation to spur external pressure, as there is evidence that leaders may choose mediation when seeking political cover for concessions (Beardsley 2010).

Next, consider an actor's perceptions of the other party's preferences. A shift, for example, in Chile's perceptions toward viewing Argentina's preferences as being more in line with its own can be an accurate representation of true preferences, or a misperception brought about due to bias. Both cases make a resolution more likely, but different causal mechanisms underlie them. Misperception due to bias arises from the same sources as a shift in one's own preferences: improved trust and commonality. As stated above, common identity signals a similarity in positive characteristics. Because individuals expect members of their in-group to share their beliefs and values (Robbins and Krueger 2005), it is natural – even if not necessarily rational – to extend this similarity to other dimensions. This can reduce the effect of the negative perception of the opposing side in bargaining (Dickson 2009), which makes resolution less likely. In contrast, a more accurate representation of true preferences arises from communication and commonality. Improved communication raises the signal-to-noise ratio of discussion, and commonality can indicate true similarity in preference and falsely perceived similarity. Combined, they enable an actor to discern more accurately the preferences of the other disputant, getting away from the biases introduced by viewing each other through a false self/other dichotomy and by the position-taking of the disputants. Among other benefits, this decreases the belief that one's opponent will renege on the agreement during implementation, helping to reduce the credible commitment problem. It is in this spirit that the Pope's emissary advises, as the following passage from the United Nations Report on the Beagle Conflict suggests, that the nations' 'ancient' linguistic and denominational identities should trump Chile and Argentina's secular (arguably more superficial) grievances:

> Since your two nations are clearly linked by language, faith and religious feelings, the Mediator considers that it may be possible to envisage the extension of these ancient ties to other fields (economic, industrial, commercial, tourist and cultural): the circumstances which make this desirable and advisable are numerous. (United Nations 1977, 245)

The Mediator even goes as far as to suggest that these countries will 'forget' their disagreements if they submit themselves to the Will of God (United Nations 1977, 246). This was an 'identity play' that Queen Elizabeth

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II (who was a protestant) would have been less able to execute, and, given the feuding nations' overwhelmingly Catholic populaces, one can credit the Pope's success in mediating this conflict in part with his ability to shift the dialogue of the negotiations away from territorial disagreements while reminding the claimants of their common religious affiliation. Moreover, the above passage suggests that the Pope and his emissary made clever use of the tactic of 'altercasting' (see Pratkanis 2000): the mediation process added to the salience of the disputants' religious identity, placing the representatives of Chile and Argentina into the roles of 'good Catholics', and, consequently, persuading them to behave in a manner consistent with these imposed roles (in essence, attempting to compel the disputants to settle their territorial differences peacefully).

Finally, consider the quality of information unrelated to preferences. This category includes the relative power of both disputants, the probability each party might renege upon the agreement and the chance of third-party enforcement of the original agreement, and so on. Improved communication decreases uncertainty in all these aspects of the negotiation, decreasing the chances of war (Fearon 1995). As noted above, shared identity facilitates improved communication in several ways. Should the shared ID be linguistic or be correlated strongly with a linguistic ID, so that it too is substantially shared, then communication absent translation would typically be more effective at conveying information. A common cultural idiom may also make misunderstandings less likely, as cultural references would be better understood. With respect to the Beagle Channel mediation, this common cultural framework existed within the rituals and requirements of Catholicism.

Thus, there are numerous pathways by which a shared identity aspect can increase the likelihood of a successful conflict negotiation. As we briefly noted, however, conflict tends to exacerbate existing identity cleavages or even engender new ones. Using the above example, before the conflict the salience of nationalist identities *Argentinean* and *Chilean* may have been low, with many individuals having non-zero salience in both simultaneously, but by the time negotiations occurred most actors' saliences in nationhood might have been strong and dichotomous. In this case, identity would provide little benefit, and the reverse of some of the processes detailed here, spurred by manifestations of non-shared identities, would increase the belief that the parties had substantially different preferences, decrease their individual benefits for coming to a resolution, and lower the signal-to-noise ratio of the negotiations. As we explain in the fifth section, it is unlikely that parties in bilateral negotiations in this context would hit upon identity plays focusing on shared identity aspects themselves, even if compromise in bargaining were their primary goal. This is one way in which a skilled mediator can be useful. In the following

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two sections, we describe how identity weights are endogenous to the process of interpersonal interaction, and we discuss the potential usefulness of third-party mediation in the context of this broadened theory.

A theory of endogenous identity formation

Thus far, we have treated the weights on actors' identity aspects, or IDs, as fixed. As discussed briefly in the second section, however, implicit in our definition of an actor's identity vector is the idea of identity change: at a basic level, these weights must come from an actor's social context. As this context varies over the course of an individual's life – and for the time being, we focus on individuals, narrowing our definition of actor – so too should the weights on a person's IDs. Social context dictates the array of individuals with whom one engages in repeated social interactions; these social interactions alter identity (McGuire *et al.* 1978; Weigert, Teitge and Teitge 1986; Grotevant 1992; Caputi 1997; Elbedour, Bastien and Center 1997; Côte and Levine 2002). Our theory rests on a simple assumption, supported by several causal pathways: successful manifestations of an ID experienced during a potentially gainful interaction with another person can increase the weight one places on that ID. Gainful interactions here are any in which manifesting a shared ID has a benefit; we identified several benefits in the previous two sections for bargaining interactions intended to resolve conflict.

It is natural to assume that increasing the weight on an ID in response to the possibility of garnering a benefit is a rational action, and certainly this interpretation is consistent with our theory. In other words, purely rational responses to potential gains would induce actors to increase the weights on the IDs that are most likely to produce these gains, as we have assumed. After all, the static model of which this is an extension assumes that the chance of a successful manifestation is increasing in the weight, while the cost of manifestation is decreasing in it. Therefore, one is more likely to be able to signal a shared ID via its manifestation in response to another's manifestation the higher one's weight is on that ID. One need not assume rational responses, though, for our key assumption to hold. Simply assuming that one desires to be part of the in-group, as signaled by others' manifestations of the in-group ID, is sufficient motivation for one to seek to increase one's weight on that ID, consistent with our theory. And there are many reasons why an individual might want to be part of the in-group, some of which may not be rational, or even rationalizable.[15]

[15] Though we focus on increasing ID weights with the intent to manifest a shared ID, the theory could also apply to situations prior to mediation in which disputants attempt to manifest divergent IDs in order to signal intransigence. As the weights on the IDs may be

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There are also many ways in which an individual may increase the weight on an ID. For example, each successful manifestation by another person might lead one to increase one's weight on that ID by a set amount every time, or by an amount dependent on the present value of the weight. The latter option might better model a scenario in which, once one's weight had moved close to 1 or 0, little further movement would occur. Practically, we expect that even those rationally attempting to adjust their ID weights, as opposed to merely responding unconsciously to the present context, would be limited in this regard by the malleability of their self-concepts. As an illustration, we return to the politician from our example in the second section. Extensive discussions with fellow Sunnis might result in unconscious adoption of behavioral prescriptions associated with Sunni Islam, increasing the importance of the *Sunni* ID in his self-concept, raising its weight in his identity vector. Or he could recognize the need for an increased weight on his *Sunni* ID and consciously mimic these same behavioral prescriptions, but fail to do so compellingly due to his inability to internalize the identity shift. His ID weight would shift only slowly, and he would commit frequent faux pas. The politician might, though, truly be able to 'feel their pain,' so to speak, internalize the identity shift, perhaps with abundant research and coaching designed to aid in this endeavor, and shift his ID weight rapidly. Whether this process is unconscious or conscious, fast or slow, however, our argument holds so long as the direction of the movement in ID weight is correct.

While we have presented the interaction within which individuals might choose to manifest an aspect of their identities as something separate, the interaction itself is really just one more piece of historical context of the sort that gave rise to that person's identity in the first place. Thus, the final component of our theory of endogenous identity formation specifies that manifesting an identity aspect can also alter one's identity weights. The politician might fail to convince other Sunnis of his sincerity, but the act of manifesting might increase his weight on his Sunni religion. Passing successfully requires convincing others of the validity of your claim, which often necessitates study of and practice in the behavioral prescriptions associated with the ID. The expenditure in time and potentially resources this necessitates may make it easier for you to manifest that identity in the future, increasing the weight on that ID.

Central to the theory's functioning is the idea of *feedback*. High-weight IDs are less costly to manifest and more likely to succeed – this leads to

independent, however, this prior action need not alter the potential benefits to manifesting a shared ID for actors seeking resolution of the conflict, or the utility of a mediator in achieving these potential benefits.

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more frequent manifestation, and more successful manifestation. More frequent and successful manifestations imply yet higher weights on that ID, and induce higher weights in others on that ID, leading to even more frequent and successful manifestations. This sort of positive feedback process is often associated with path-dependent dynamics (Page 2006): the greater the attention to the behavioral prescriptions associated with a particular ID, the more beneficial is additional attention in the future.[16] One way of looking at the role of the mediator in an identity play, as discussed in the next section, is to initiate and encourage this cycle of positive feedback, allowing the disputants to take advantage of the benefits of shared identity described in the previous section.

Before moving on, however, it is once more helpful to examine the nature of the actor in our theory. We have discussed identity formation and change as a consequence of repeated interactions, and have therefore focused on the level of the individual, as individuals are the ones participating in these interactions. Simple aggregation to the state level of such interactions strikes us as particularly unwarranted, since not all individuals within the state will have experienced the same interactions. Because of this, we view the application of our theory to the case of mediation, described in the next section, as an elite-level theory: the representatives of the disputants and the mediator engage in repeated interactions in the context of coming to an agreement, which is then implemented in some fashion by the disputing states.[17] This does not mean, however, that the aggregate identities of states must remain static as those of their representatives change. Interactions with opinion leaders and perhaps the media as well can also lead to identity change by the same process described here. Representatives can, via repeated interactions, influence the identities of

[16] The time component of this process prevents this statement from being a tautology: focus on an ID at time t increases the benefits of focus on that ID at time $t + 1$. This leads to greater focus at time $t + 1$, and thus even greater benefits of focus on that ID at time $t + 2$, and so on. Such a process can produce strong in-groups over time that are highly focused on a small number of IDs. Though we do not consider this scenario here, unsuccessful manifestations, more common with low-weight IDs, might have the opposite effect. Unsuccessful manifestations might decrease weights, leading to less benefit for manifestation in the future, and thus even fewer successful manifestations going forward. This process is unlikely to lead to the vanishing of an ID, however, for the simple reason that there becomes progressively less of a reason over time to bother manifesting a low-weight ID.

[17] We do not need states to implement the agreements of their representatives with perfect fidelity for our theory to be useful. It is sufficient that the agreement makes the states more likely to resolve the dispute, which we feel is generally a fair assumption, as noted in footnote 11. The existence of extremist parties who might want to derail a peace process adds complication, but would only render this assumption false if there were a sufficiently high chance that the groups could not only scuttle the agreement, but also leave the disputants *less* likely to resolve their conflict than before the agreement was reached.

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state leadership; further, access to, and sometimes control of, the media and opinion leaders provide state leadership with an opportunity to influence the population as a whole. Thus, over time, the beneficial effects of identity change at the elite level may be translated to the larger population, beyond just a resolution of the conflict.

Identity and mediation

Mediation can take numerous forms, and a shared identity aspect can enhance several of them. To make the connection between the benefits of shared ID and mediation techniques, we use the same categorization of techniques as Beardsley *et al*. (2006; see also Touval and Zartman 1985; Princen 1992; Bercovitch and Houston 1996; Wilkenfeld *et al*. 2005). This categorization separates mediation techniques into three useful groups: facilitation, consisting of information revelation and trust building; formulation, consisting of the active proposal of and coordination on bargaining outcomes and procedural tactics designed to focus the negotiation (Bercovitch and Houston 2000); and manipulation, consisting of pressure, rewards, and punishments. In this categorization, negotiating in the context of a shared ID directly enhances the efficacy of facilitation and formulation, and can indirectly aid with manipulation. The enhancement of each operates under the causal mechanisms described in the previous sections, on two levels. A shared ID between disputants and a shared ID between disputants and the mediator(s) both improve the probability of successful conflict resolution.

Effective information revelation in mediated negotiations is hampered by the credibility of both the other party and the mediator. Without some reason for the disputants to believe that the information provided is truthful, the words of all other actors are no more than cheap talk. In the Beagle Channel case, the Pope's stature among Catholics as a 'moral authority' garnered his emissary credibility. Noting this, scholars have directly addressed the role of credibility and bias in mediation, concluding that some degree of bias of the mediator toward one party can be beneficial, although bias toward peace on its own is not (e.g. Kydd 2003, 2006; Rauchhaus 2006; Savun 2008). Bias toward a party provides more reason for the favored party to consider the information provided by the biased mediator, for preferences of the two will be aligned; likewise, the non-favored party is likely to accept the terms of a resolution if that party believes that a biased mediator is arbitrating evenhandedly despite its bias (Carnevale and Choi 2000).

As detailed in the third section, a shared ID promotes information revelation in several ways. First, it increases the credibility of all actors via

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increased trust in the other side's positive intentions (Karim and Pegnetter 1983; Kelman 1997; Kriesberg 2001; Kydd 2006).[18] Of course, increased trust itself is also an element of facilitation. Second, shared ID induces the perception of shared preferences with the other party or parties. Third, it can actually shift the preferences of the actors closer together. Both of these act as does explicit bias, providing disputants more reason to consider information. Note that, in the former case, a mediator using a shared identity appeal can effectively be 'biased' toward *both* sides at once, as perceptions of shared preferences need not always match reality.[19] Fourth and finally, the improved communication occasioned by a shared ID facilitates information flow directly. All these benefits accrue to information revelation both between mediator and disputant, and between disputants themselves, if the latter share a salient identity aspect.

Formulation strategies are also enhanced in the presence of a shared identity. One way in which formulation works is for the mediator to discover and help both disputants focus on a favorable settlement that they are not themselves seeing. A shared identity aspect aids in this endeavor in three ways: (i) it can shift the preferences of the disputants; (ii) it can shift each party's perception of the other party's preferences; and (iii) it enhances trust in the mediator and the perception that the mediator's interests are aligned with each disputant sharing its ID. The first two expand the bargaining zone, increasing the number of possible settlements acceptable to both sides. The third way better enables the mediator to focus on the particular settlement it desires, as the mediator is better able to convince the parties that it has their best interests at heart.

Manipulation strategies rely on forms of pressure, rewards, or punishments that effectively change each party's utility from a settlement. A shared ID can have the same effect, albeit indirectly, through the pressure mechanism we identified in the previous section. If the mediator is able to induce the same increase in commonality and trust in third parties upon whom the disputants rely for support – for example, a democratic populace – then the pressure that these external parties will apply to the disputants to settle will change the utility the disputants gain from a settlement just as other forms of manipulation would. In essence, the mediator can use shared

[18] Recent scholarship has explored a complementary means of achieving credibility: the external sanction of mediators by the democratic community (Crescenzi *et al.* 2005).

[19] If preferences diverge too much from reality and there is no enforcement mechanism for the settlement, however, we would expect settlements arising from identity-driven misperception to be short lived and prone to renegotiation and reneging. This may be related to evidence that negotiation contexts provided by mediation diminish in power as disputants move away from them, implying that successfully mediated disputes may be prone to reoccur in the long term (Betts 1999; Beardsley 2008).

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ID to induce constituents to engage in manipulation. Further, third-party mediators also have constituencies; if they possess military power as well, then disputants might be more likely to believe that the third party would enforce any agreement, potentially improving the likelihood of peaceful settlement (Favretto 2009).

Thus, salient shared ID aspects, both between the disputants and between the mediator and the disputants, can aid in successful conflict resolution, in a manner complementary to those previously identified in the mediation literature. Given this, the practical question is: How can we maximize the salience of any shared identity aspects, particularly in the context of conflict? In the remainder of this section, we detail how to choose a mediator to take advantage of shared ID, and what strategies should be used by the appropriate mediator.

Using shared identity to resolve interstate disputes

Our theory of endogenous identity formation dictates the manner in which identity aspects become more salient via continuous interactions, of the sort to be expected in an ongoing negotiation between two groups of negotiators, or two groups and one or more third-party mediators. As the benefits of the use of identity in mediation increase the more parties share a salient ID, the goal of identity-based mediation must be to encourage this scenario to the greatest degree possible. The theory suggests two ways in which this can occur. The first would be for one actor to manifest the most salient identity of another, as attempted by the Sunni politician in our example in the second section. This implies that either one of the two disputants attempts to manifest the most salient identity of the other, or that the mediator attempts to manifest the most salient ID of one of the disputants. By our arguments in the previous section, the latter case is no different than that of a biased mediator, which may be beneficial in some cases in achieving successful negotiations (see Touval and Zartman 1985; Kydd 2003; Favretto 2009; for examples of how biased third parties can more credibly use leverage). In contrast, our theory suggests that the former case would be difficult to achieve. Even if members of one party were willing to play this strategic game, it is likely that the most salient cleavages at the start of a conflict negotiation are those in which the two parties are diametrically opposed. In addition, the parties may have strong incentives to exacerbate these cleavages as a means of occupying strong bargaining positions. Further, a cleavage made highly salient through prolonged conflict would lead to extremely divergent weights on the opposing identity aspects, making the cost of any such strategic play high, and the likelihood of its success low. Accordingly, our theory indicates

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that it would usually not be beneficial for one disputant to attempt to manifest the opposing disputant's most salient ID, even if it so desired.

To see this, consider a three-identity example in which two disputants (A and B) each have a salient nationalist identity (*a* and *b*), and share a third identity, *c*. To tie it to our empirical example, A could be Argentina, B Chile, and the third identity c, Catholicism. Our arguments suggest that post-conflict identity vectors may approximate *(1, 0, 0.5)* for A and *(0, 1, 0.6)* for B. In this scenario, no disputant will ever be able to manifest the other disputant's most salient identity at first, for the attempt would lead to a potential penalty, and the cost of doing so would be high. A third party possessing a highly salient identity matching either *a* or *b* could engage in repeated ID manifestations with the respective disputant, gaining the benefits of a biased mediator, but would not be able to use this technique to draw in the other disputant.

Given the limited value of identity in this context, we focus on the second way to encourage shared ID highlighted by our theory: each party must increase the salience of some shared third identity aspect. If this ID could be sufficiently strengthened so that each party could credibly manifest it – that is, the chance of a successful manifestation would be high, and the cost of the attempt would be low – then further negotiations could benefit from frequent manifestations of this shared identity aspect. Further, our theory implies that this can be done *without* altering the salience of either of the two disputants' primary IDs.

How might this take place? To see, return one more time to the example with three identity dimensions, represented by the vector *(a, b, c)*. Instead of focusing on *a* or *b*, however, we concentrate on *c*. This third aspect is some shared identity dimension that has received little attention during the conflict, and each disputant's weight on it remains near pre-conflict levels. This ID could be a shared language, ethnicity, religion, or any other aspect of identity not directly related to the conflict. That is to say, if the conflict is an ethnic one, *c* should not involve ethnicity.[20]

Our theory suggests two possible ways to strengthen aspect *c*. The first involves repeated social interactions in the context of *c* (a context, we argue, that third-party mediators provide). The second possibility involves bilateral attempts by each party to manifest *c*, in the absence of a third-party mediator. Each is possible, but not equally likely.

[20] Of course, if there were *no* shared identity dimension in which both parties placed non-zero weights, mediators might receive little benefit from trying to encourage it. In this case mediators might benefit more from attempting to manifest the most salient ID of one of the disputants in order to at least take advantage of the benefits of a biased mediator discussed briefly at the beginning of this subsection.

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Bilateral negotiations between the parties occur in the extant context of the conflict, and the parties are therefore likely to fall back on their most salient identity dimensions, *a* and *b*. It is difficult to think in the context of a shared ID when the focus has been on differences. Thus, bilateral negotiations are unlikely to take full advantage of a shared identity aspect between the disputants, although we do expect this likelihood to vary with the disputants' weights on *c*.[21] Put differently, while bargaining is easier when IDs are shared, third-party mediators, as we explain below, are often needed to encourage manifestation of those shared IDs because of the nature of conflict and the possible strategic incentives among disputants to manifest divergent IDs.

In contrast to bilateral negotiation attempts, mediation is a process that brings a third party into frequent contact with the groups in conflict (Bercovitch 1991, 4), and the repeated contact of mediation provides an alternative context for the negotiation. Forced to acknowledge individuals (the mediators) who are members of neither the in-group nor the out-group, the chance that the representatives of the disputants attempt to manifest the shared ID increases. Even apart from the actual tactics taken by the mediator, then, the provision of this new context increases the probability of a successful resolution to the conflict by moving disputants' focus away from their salient identity cleavage.

To make this clearer, consider an idealized third-party mediator with identity vector *(a, b, 1)*, where *a* and *b* can take any values, but preferably are small so as to avoid the impression of bias. We would argue that the Papal emissary approaches this ideal. Such a third party suffers no cost for and never fails at manifesting ID *c*, and thus we would expect the mediator often to try this, given non-zero salience for *c* for each disputant. Over time, the disputants will come to view the third party in the context of identity dimension *c*, and in interacting with it will tend to manifest *c* themselves. This in turn will tend to increase the weights that A and B place on *c*, increasing the salience of the identity aspect, and thus the likelihood that it will form the context within which further negotiations will take place. As this occurs, the rate of manifestation of a salient shared ID among *all* parties increases, leading to the benefits in negotiation detailed above.

This argument suggests how mediators should best attempt an identity play. Third-party mediators who deliberately and repeatedly display the same shared identity aspect of the two disputants can alter the negotiation context toward that of commonality between the parties more effectively than a generic third-party mediator. Consistency and frequency of identity

[21] The higher the weights on aspect *c*, the more salient that ID, and so the more likely disputants will think to manifest it without the prompting of a mediator.

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manifestation is key here. The mediator should attempt to manifest ID *c* as often as possible, while at the same time avoiding manifestation of *a* or *b* whenever all parties are present, to avoid the appearance of one-sided bias that might destroy the attempt at achieving joint trust and commonality. This entails using all signals related to *c*, and few, if any, related to *a* or *b*. Some examples include: moving negotiations to a neutral site associated with the common religion/ethnicity/language/etc.; conducting negotiations in the common language; or employing common religious rites during the negotiation.

While this explains how and why to increase the salience of a shared ID, it offers no guidance as to how to choose *c*, due to the deliberate simplicity of our examples. In the real world, there are many more than three identity aspects available to the disputants. Not all of these will be salient to both parties, and different IDs may be more salient to each. To apply our theory, we need to identify the optimal *c* out of the set of all possibilities. Below, we offer a two-step process to accomplish this.

Finding common ground and choosing a mediator

First, the greatest point of similarity in identity across the disputant parties must be discerned. A third party manifesting an identity aspect on which both parties do not place appreciable weight will be less likely to be effective in spurring commonality. The identity dimension to manifest will be the one with the maximal minimal weight across all parties and across all aspects. To find this, one must first discern relative values of identity weights for each disputant. This requires both careful case analysis and individual meetings with each negotiating team before choosing a mediator. Then, the minimal weight placed on each identity aspect by the disputants must be determined. These minimal weights form a set, one for each aspect. In the simple example above, the set of minimal weights is {0, 0, 0.5}.[22] Finally, the greatest of these weights is chosen, and the corresponding aspect will be the optimal one on which a mediator should focus. Note that this procedure yields aspect *c* for the example above.

Second, once the optimal aspect has been discerned, a mediator must be chosen who can credibly manifest this aspect, and can do so repeatedly. If no such mediator is available, one could traverse the set of minimal weights and choose the next largest, though with an accompanying decrease is efficacy. If all parties need not be satisfied for the conflict to be resolved, then it may be possible to do better by considering only the

[22] The first two elements are zero because in each case there is one party that places no weight on that ID. The third is 0.5 as it is the smaller weight of the two weights the parties ascribe to ID *c*.

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identities of the combinations of disputants able to resolve the conflict on their own. The maximal minimal weight will be no smaller in this case than when considering all parties, and may be larger.

To see how these recommendations play out in a historical example, consider the Rhodes Armistice Agreement of 1949. We begin with some background. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War was how it ended. By January of 1949, the UN had intervened to stop the violent and long-standing disputes between the newly created state of Israel and the surrounding Arab nations of Transjordan (now Jordan), Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. There was a tremendous amount of pressure from Washington, DC and Western Europe to resolve this conflict, but the success of this ceasefire is often credited to Dr Ralph Bunche, one of the UN's chief diplomats who, because of his role in the armistice, became the first African-American to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

There are many factors contributing to the success of the Rhodes agreements, but two are particularly relevant here. First, the negotiation tactics Bunche used were a testament to his keen understanding of human psychology. By selecting the Hôtel des Roses as the neutral site for the peace talks, Bunche was able to exploit the lodging conditions to exert a form of external pressure on the disputants – who, according to several accounts, were literally stuck in a secluded hotel that, at the time, was known for its uncomfortable rooms, poor ventilation, and inedible food (see Urquhart 1993) – to resolve their conflict. Moreover, the social outings Bunche arranged for the Arab and Israeli negotiators were instrumental to the settlement. Game playing provided an informal venue for representatives from the warring nations to interact, thus facilitating communication (Tharoor 2006), and Bunche used billiards tournaments to relieve the tension of the formal meetings, and, ultimately, to wear away disputants' mutual distrust (Stanton 2010).[23] In the language of our theory, Bunche's tactics took the disputant's representatives out of their element, deemphasizing the disputants' polarized primary identities.

Second, the UN's choice of mediator was a clever one, for Bunche's background gave him unique insight into the Arab–Israeli conflict. Given that both Jews and Arabs have rich histories punctuated with memories of intense

[23] Rosenne (1990, 177) recalls that billiards games became something of a welcomed ritual:

> Those games [of three-sided snooker], never mentioned in the contemporary or subsequent literature, were, I think, one of the keys to Bunche's success. Certainly they were the catalyst. They broke the ice. They showed us that the Egyptians were humans like us, with similar emotions of pleasure when they were winning and of dismay when they were losing – Bunche insisted all the time on true sportsmanship in these games – and I hope and believe that the Egyptians observed the same human qualities in us.

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social and political marginalization, Bunche probably had a better chance than any other diplomat did at making appeals to a shared identity based on marginalized status. Bunche himself notes that his ability to draw from his experiences as a 'Negro in America' was instrumental to his diplomatic success (see Bunche 1950 in Henry 1995). By highlighting a common identity and deemphasizing the divergent ones, Bunche fundamentally engaged in identity bargaining, and did so quite successfully. Viewed in this manner, it is no surprise that the Crips and Bloods in Los Angeles modeled their gangland violence truce in 1992 after the Middle East armistice that Bunche, a fellow Angeleno, had brokered back in 1949 (see Stein 1997).

Concluding remarks

This essay breaks new ground in several respects. By integrating the rational-choice framework of conflict bargaining with psychological models of social identity, we synthesize perspectives from two seminal literatures – literatures that seldom speak to one another – to develop a novel theory of identity formation. Beyond simply offering the old maxim that 'identity matters', this paper develops a systematic argument to explain why it matters and, more importantly, how identity manifestation can be utilized in bargaining.

The applicability of our theory to the study of conflict negotiation is our second major contribution. Discussion of the role of identity in conflict typically focuses on its detrimental aspects. Cleavages between claimants' identities make it easy for each to view the other in an 'us vs. them' context that renders bargaining more difficult. However, as we have argued, shared aspects of identity can also be used to help resolve conflict. When claimants share some aspect of their identities, even when this aspect is not initially salient, a third-party mediator can help to enhance its salience and reduce the barriers to successful settlements. The theory we present traces the causal chain behind this claim and details how the salience of identity aspects endogenously changes with interpersonal and intergroup interactions. By enhancing trust, commonality, and communication between actors, shared identity moves disputants' preferences and their perceptions of the other disputant's preferences closer together, and allows both disputants to make better use of the information revealed during the negotiation. This widens the bargaining zone and makes successful conflict resolution more likely.

Third parties making concerted 'identity plays' can exploit this palliative role of shared identity in order to improve bargaining outcomes. Our theory thus predicts a complementary role for third-party mediation in international conflict to that extant in the literature. Consistent with the literature on bias in mediation (e.g. Kydd 2003, 2006; Rauchhaus 2006;

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Savun 2008), using shared identity increases the utility of information, reducing bargaining uncertainty. With shared identity, however, not only do both disputants get more use out of information, but more potential settlements are also possible due to a shifting of preferences. Consequently, we foresee a powerful role for identity plays in third-party mediation, and believe their use should be encouraged. To that end, we have offered some suggestions for choosing the mediator and the mediator's strategy. We also believe the potential importance of this mechanism suggests an increased attention to the dynamics of mediation, as data on tactics used over time would be necessary for any true empirical test of the theory we present.

In addition to the future research that it can potentially generate, this paper informs long-standing conversations about the use of identity as a form of socio-political power. Clearly, identity bargaining can be viewed as a 'power play' in the sense that clever mediator choice and negotiation tactics can influence disputants' preferences and thus ultimately their decisions (Lukes [1974] 2005). When considered from a rationalist perspective, appeals to common identity can help third-party mediators bring about favorable negotiation outcomes. Perhaps more importantly, such appeals can also change the incentive structures of disputants, which facilitates conflict resolution (Dowding 1996). Overall, the ideas expressed in this article speak to the relational nature of power, for we argue that the process of identity bargaining involves not only choosing an appropriate identity in a given context, but also manipulating the identities of those in conflict.

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