Imagine a woman who encounters an advertisement for a new car that states it is endorsed by other women. How will the woman respond to the advertisement? Is she more likely to be persuaded to buy the car than she would be if the advertisement stated that the car is endorsed by men? How likely is her resulting attitude to last over time (e.g., long enough to get to a car dealer)? Finally, do the answers to these questions depend on the extent to which this woman likes being a member of the group "women" and feels that it is an important part of her self-concept? Although these are seemingly simple questions, their answers can be quite complex.

Recent studies have suggested that an individual's characteristics such as group memberships (e.g., belonging to the group "women") affect behavior to the extent that those characteristics are salient and have been adopted as identities (i.e., they form an important part of an individual's self-concept). For example, a survey of Hispanic consumers found that those who strongly identified with their ethnic group reported being more likely to buy brands advertised with Hispanic spokespersons than did those who weakly identified with their ethnic group (Deshpande, Hoyer, & Donthu, 1986). In the political realm, Plutzer and Zipp (1996; Zipp & Plutzer, 1985) found that women were particularly likely to vote for women political candidates when they identified with "women's issues" and were registered as Independents.
An important question raised by such findings is how identification with aspects of oneself—such as one's group—affects behavior. One plausible mechanism for the impact of identity on behavior is through persuasion. Specifically, identity would influence persuasion processes, and the attitudes resulting from persuasion would then guide behavior. For example, an Hispanic individual's identification with the group "Hispanic" might help guide the attitude he or she forms about advertised products, and those attitudes would guide his or her consumptive behavior. The major goal of this chapter is to outline an integrative approach to understanding the role of identity in persuasion and subsequent behavior. A number of studies have examined the impact of making an aspect of one's identity temporarily salient (e.g., when students are told that an important change is being considered for their university, their student identity is presumably made salient; Petty, Cacioppo, & Haugtvedt, 1992). However, this chapter focuses on theories and research illuminating the question of the impact of enduring aspects of the self-concept (e.g., group memberships, personal traits, or characteristics) on persuasion and behavior.

CONCEPTUALIZATION AND ASSESSMENT OF IDENTITY

In this chapter, we use the term identity to refer to an individual's adoption of a particular group or groups (e.g., "I'm a Democrat") and/or trait or traits (e.g., "I'm honest") as part of her or his self-concept. Importantly, identities are not necessarily ascribed to individuals by others, as traits (e.g., "You are tardy") or group memberships ("You are White") can be, but instead are the subjective perceptions of individuals, willfully chosen as part of who they define themselves to be. More specifically, an identity can be either a group identity or a personal identity. Our use of the term group identity incorporates ideas from social identity theory (SIT) and reference group theory about identifying with a group. Social identity theory defines a social identity as an existing group membership that becomes part of the self-concept through categorization of the self as a member of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In SIT, existing group memberships are based on social similarities and differences between people that society recognizes as defining membership in certain social categories in contrast to others. Thus, SIT does not allow for the possibility of membership that becomes part of the self-concept through categorization of the self as a member of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

1Although identification with issues relevant to one's group is not the same as identification with one's group itself, it is plausible that the two constructs are highly related.

identifying with and incorporating into the self-concept a group to which one does not belong but to which one nevertheless aspires to belong. In contrast, reference group theory explicitly posits that one can use groups to which one does not belong (i.e., reference groups) to define the self (e.g., Siegel & Siegel, 1957). Our definition of group identity thus includes any groups that form part of the self-concept, whether the person is actually a member of the group or aspires to be a member.

A personal identity as conceptualized here is a trait or individual difference that is incorporated into the self-concept. Our conceptualization of personal identity, like that of group identity, also includes both traits that the person already possesses along with traits that the person aspires to possess as long as those traits or groups are part of the self-concept. Membership in a group or possession of a trait that is unimportant to a person's self-definition is not an identity. Of course, the group memberships and traits (whether real or desired) in one's self-system can vary in the extent to which one identifies with them. For example, people might be a member of Groups A and B (or possess Traits A and B) and willfully consider these traits and groups to be at least nominally part of the self-concept, but some groups (or traits) can be higher in identity than others if the person cares more about these groups or traits (cf. Markus, 1977).

We combine the concepts of group and personal identity in our consideration of identity effects in persuasion because the existing empirical evidence suggests that the two concepts, though traditionally examined separately within the social psychological literature, might often be indistinguishable in their impact on persuasion. In a recent review, Deaux (1996) suggested that social (i.e., group) and personal identities do not differ in content. She argued that social categories can be based on one defining characteristic, such as being female or being a professor, and that what it means to be a member of a social category requires reference to traits, characteristics, and behaviors. Likewise, personal traits, at least implicitly, have meaning because they refer to a group. That is, they draw a similarity between the self and others who share the trait (e.g., "intellectual") and a difference between the self and others who do not share the trait. Empirical evidence also suggests that group and personal identities are not separate constructs in individuals' self-concepts. For example, Reid and Deaux (1996) found that when responding to the task "Who am I?", individuals clustered their responses on the basis of conceptual meaning (e.g., "athleticism," comprising both group and trait terms) rather than on the basis of personal versus group identities. Based on the prevailing evidence, we make the simplifying assumption that the mechanisms through which group identities affect persuasion processes do not differ from those through which personal identities affect persuasion processes.
Identity can be made relevant in persuasion situations in various ways. The majority of previous empirical research relevant to identity effects has operationalized identity as a match between the group membership of a particular message source and the message recipient (e.g., the source and recipient are both female), or a match between the framing of the message arguments and an aspect of message recipients’ self-concept (e.g., the message makes an appeal to some dimension that the recipient values such as an image appeal to a high self-monitor). However, it is important to note that identity can be operationalized in ways other than matching source or message features to the person’s self-concept. For example, the persuasion context itself can make identity salient (e.g., simply receiving the message in the presence of ingroup or outgroup members).

OVERVIEW OF THEORIES EXPLAINING THE EFFECTS OF IDENTITY ON PERSUASION

Previous approaches to studying the role of identity in attitude change have tended to focus on specifying just one process by which identity determines attitudes, with different theorists focusing on different processes. The assumption that variables tend to have one outcome on persuasion (e.g., appealing to one’s identity is “good” for persuasion), and there is one process by which this outcome is achieved, is a common scenario for variables in the persuasion literature. Regarding identity effects, there appear to have been two bursts of theoretical activity addressing this question, the first in the 1950s and early 1960s, and the second in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the earliest relevant theories is Festinger’s (1950) theory of social reality testing, which posited that individuals are influenced by similar others (e.g., ingroup members, or those who share one’s traits) in forming judgments for which physical reality is low (e.g., attitudes) because people gain subjective validity that their opinions are “correct” to the extent that similar others agree with them. To the extent that similar others disagree, there is pressure to change attitudes to agree with those others. Festinger further argued that the impact of similar others on attitudes would increase, through this same process of gaining subjective validity, as the message recipients’ attractiveness to (i.e., identification with) the others increased. In examining this hypothesis, Festinger and his colleagues (e.g., Back, 1951) found that the more cohesive a group was (i.e., the more attractive the group was to its members) the more its members influenced each others’ attitudes about an ambiguous stimulus. Importantly, the theory of social reality testing posited that individuals’ identifications have an impact on attitudes through one process—the process of social reality testing, gaining confidence in the subjective validity of one’s judgments through agreement with similar others.

10. IDENTITY AND PERSUASION

Alternatively, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) hypothesized that the process of influence associated with identity (particularly group identity) is that of normative social influence. That is, they suggested that ingroups exert normative social influence to a greater extent than do outgroups. Normative social influence is conceptualized as “an influence to conform with the positive expectations of another,” where the fulfillment of positive expectations leads to positive feelings of solidarity, and unfulfillment leads to alienation (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955, p. 629). Replicating and extending the findings of Asch’s line-judging conformity experiments (e.g., Asch, 1951, 1952), they found that participants conformed to the incorrect judgments of others (confederates) more than twice as often when they believed they and the others were part of a group than when they and the others were merely individuals participating in the experiment (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Thus, Deutsch and Gerard hypothesized that the unique process through which group memberships affect attitude change is through normative social influence, a process that could be assumed to be more likely the more an individual wants to feel solidarity with the group (i.e., the greater their identification with the group).

One of the most well-known theories of identification is Kelman’s (1958, 1961) three-process model. Kelman suggested that individuals are persuaded by expert sources because people accept the information on its merits (internalization), but information from attractive sources (whether attractive groups or individuals) is accepted because people want to establish or maintain a self-defining relationship with the source. Kelman argued that in adopting an attitude through this identification mechanism, the recipient is not so concerned with the content of the adopted attitude (as in internalization) but is satisfied by the act of agreement itself. Kelman’s theory suggests that identification is more likely the more attractive the group or individual source is to the message recipient.

Finally, Sherif and Hovland’s (1961) social judgment theory of persuasion also suggested a process through which identity affects attitude change, although this was not their primary intent. Specifically, in much of their early research on the effects of ego-involvement, they operationalized involvement in terms of a person’s group memberships. For example, for the issue of alcohol prohibition, highly ego-involved participants were members of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and Salvation Army (who held extremely pro-prohibition attitudes) and informal antiprohibition groups, whereas uninvolved participants were college students (who held moderately antiprohibition attitudes). Sherif and Hovland suggested that members of highly ego-involved groups would be more resistant to attempts to change their attitudes on group-relevant issues than members of groups for which the issue was not involving, because, among other things,
ego-involved individuals have larger latitudes of rejection than uninvolved individuals and thus are more likely to view discrepant messages as unacceptable. Although a number of studies have indicated that high ego-involvement (suggesting high group identity) can produce resistance to persuasion (at least from sources not affiliated with the group), the mechanism behind this effect is in some dispute (see Petty et al., 1992, for additional discussion).

In the past several years, a second set of theories has been proposed to explain the process through which identity affects persuasion. The first of these modern approaches, which is most similar to traditional approaches, is the theory of referent informational influence (e.g., Turner, 1982, 1991; Turner & Oakes, 1989). A modified version of Festinger’s (1950) theory of social reality testing, the theory of referent informational influence rests on the idea that for all judgments, regardless of their manifestation in physical reality, the subjective validity of (i.e., confidence in) one’s views is a function of the extent to which similar others agree with those views. As a result of self-categorization as a member of certain groups and not others, ingroup members are perceived as similar to the self, and outgroup members as dissimilar. Once self-categorization occurs, the theory suggests the following: (a) we expect to agree with those who are functionally identical to ourselves (i.e., ingroup members); (b) when we do not agree with similar others, subjective uncertainty arises; and (c) we are influenced by the views of similar others because these views provide information about the social validity of our views, and we perceive that shared responses of ingroup members are objectively demanded (i.e., that they reflect objective reality). Shared responses refer to the prototypicality of the ingroup member’s view.—The more prototypical of the group (in Kelley’s, 1967, attributional terms, the more consensual the view across members), the more influential the view. Thus, Turner and colleagues argued that the views of ingroup members are persuasive and lead to true internalized attitude change because they are taken as an indicator of reality for all judgments (including attitudes, beliefs, and the nature of the external physical world). On the other hand, outgroup members, with whom we do not expect to agree, are less likely to produce attitude change, and thus must resort to coercion to change behavior. Hogg and Abrams (1993) also suggested that people are motivated to reduce subjective uncertainty, and that uncertainty can be reduced by agreement with others who are relevant and similar to the self (e.g., ingroup members, those who share individual traits).

Empirical tests have not supported the prediction by the theory of referent informational influence that increased subjective validity (i.e., confidence) will result from agreement with similar others on all judgments. Specifically, Goethals and Nelson (1973) predicted from Kelley’s (1967) theory of attribution that on judgments of verifiable beliefs or facts (i.e., “a potentially verifiable assertion about the attributes of an entity,” p. 118), an individual’s confidence that his or her judgment reflects a quality of the entity itself, rather than her or his idiosyncratic biasing characteristics, would increase more when a dissimilar other (one who has a different perspective) agrees than when a similar other (who shares the same biasing characteristic) agrees. Consistent with this prediction, they found that agreement with a dissimilar other (i.e., one who was shown to differ from participants in judging others) on a matter of a verifiable belief (i.e., which of two applicants would be more academically successful at the participant’s university) led to greater confidence in one’s judgment than did agreement with a similar other (i.e., one who judged others similarly; see also, Goethals, 1972). In contrast, Goethals and Nelson (1973) found that agreement with a similar other when making a judgment of an unverifiable belief or “value” (i.e., which of two applicants they personally liked better) led to greater confidence in judgment than did agreement with a dissimilar other (and to less attitude change, Berscheid, 1966), because individuals want to agree with those who share their perspectives when making judgments of preference. Thus, it appears that Festinger’s (1950) theory of social reality testing has received better empirical support than the theory of referent informational influence, although more research is needed using groups for which identity is higher than in the existing research.

Conover (1988) proposed the cognitive-affective model, an alternative contemporary theory outlining how identity affects political attitudes. This theory suggests that high identification with the ingroup, along with other individual and cultural factors, leads individuals to expend more energy on information relevant to the ingroup and to perceive and evaluate the ingroup in a positively biased manner (i.e., impacts on “political thinking”), leading to more favorable political attitudes, particularly on issues made chronically or temporarily relevant to the ingroup.

Finally, van Knippenberg and Wilke (1992) proposed a similar information-processing theory regarding the process through which social identity affects persuasion. Specifically, they suggested that individuals are more interested in information expressing ingroup attitudes than information not about their group. In addition, individuals are postulated to perceive arguments that are more prototypical of the ingroup as stronger and more valid, and thus more persuasive, than nonprototypical arguments. Thus, persuasive messages that represent ingroup norms (i.e., are more prototypical of the ingroup) elicit greater favorable thought than do nonprototypical messages, and these lead to greater attitude change. Although similar to Conover’s (1988) theory, this proposal suggests that individuals are more motivated to think favorably about information about the ingroup only.
when it represents the "prototypical" views of the ingroup, rather than any information about the ingroup.

To summarize thus far, many single-process theories have been proposed to explain how identity has an impact on persuasion. These theories can be organized into those that propose either a relatively nonthoughtful process (e.g., high identification with the message source leading to greater persuasion because agreement leads to satisfaction; Kelman, 1958, 1961) or a relatively thoughtful process (e.g., high identification with the ingroup motivating message recipients to engage in favorably biased thinking about information relevant to the ingroup; Conover, 1988) through which identity affects persuasion.

The major assumption underlying our approach is that identity can affect attitudes in multiple ways (i.e., through multiple processes) under different specifiable conditions. This assumption is derived from the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981a, 1986), which proposes that any variable in a persuasion context, including identity, can affect attitudes in four ways: (a) by acting as a simple cue, (b) by determining the extent of information processing, (c) by biasing the type or valence of thoughts that come to mind in response to information, and (d) by acting as an additional argument or piece of information.

DIVERSITY OF INITIAL FINDINGS ON THE EFFECTS OF IDENTITY

The notion that one's identity can have an important impact on the attitudes one holds can be traced back to the classic Bennington College study, in which students' political attitudes were found to become progressively more similar to the political leanings of fellow classmates (liberal) than their parents (conservative) from their freshman to senior year (Newcomb, 1943). Since then, many investigators found that persuasive messages lead to greater attitude change when they are presented by a source who shares the message recipients' group membership than when they are presented by a source who does not share this membership (e.g., McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson, & Turner, 1994; Siegel & Siegel, 1957; Wilder, 1990) and when the message content matches rather than does not match an aspect of the message recipients' identity (e.g., DeBono & Packer, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985; see Snyder & DeBono, 1989, for a review). In addition, it appears that the effects of identity on persuasion are increased under conditions in which it is more likely that the relevant identity is being activated for message recipients. For example, the persuasiveness of ingroup sources has been shown to increase as the salience of message recipients' ingroup membership increases (e.g., by having participants explicitly categorize themselves as a member of the ingroup or as a nonmember of the outgroup before being exposed to a persuasive message, McGarty et al., 1994). However, under certain conditions, messages appealing to an identity the message recipient does not hold or presented by an outgroup member have been found to be equally, and sometimes more, persuasive than messages associated with the ingroup. For example, Freedman (1967) and White and Harkins (1994, Experiment 2) found that a source who belonged to the message recipients' own ethnic group (i.e., White) could be less persuasive than a source of a different ethnic group (African American or Hispanic). Wilder (1990) found that outgroup sources who were individuated (by giving recipients personal information about the outgroup sources such as their names, hometowns, and majors) were as persuasive as ingroup sources. In addition, Petty and Wegener (1998b) found that messages that matched recipients' identity were sometimes less persuasive than messages that did not match recipients' identity. Importantly, the conditions under which these different effects are likely to occur and the processes underlying them are only beginning to attract conceptual and empirical investigation, and cannot easily be explained by previous single-process theories.

The complex and conflicting findings observed for identity present a similar situation to that which has existed for many other variables in the persuasion literature. For example, although much literature shows that increasing source credibility increases persuasion, some studies have shown that increasing source credibility can decrease or have no effect at all on persuasion (see Petty & Wegener, 1998a, for review). A complete understanding of the role of identity in persuasion requires an overall conceptual framework that can account for the diverse effects of identity and specify the processes by which these effects are obtained.

THE ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL OF PERSUASION

The ELM provides a theoretical framework for understanding and integrating the many seemingly conflicting findings in the persuasion literature. The ELM specifies four roles through which source, message, context, and other variables have an impact on attitude change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The ELM rests on the assumption that attitude change can occur as a result of two relatively different routes to persuasion: an effortful route and a route that requires less cognitive engagement.

That is, the ELM holds that sometimes people engage in a relatively effortful examination of all of the information relevant to judging the validity of the position advocated, but sometimes they do not. When people are thinking carefully about (i.e., elaborating) the issue-relevant information
presented in the persuasive message, they are said to be following the central route to attitude change. When attitude change is a result of relatively low cognitive effort, people are said to be following the peripheral route.

According to the ELM, when people are highly motivated and able to think about the issue-relevant information presented, variables such as identity can have an impact on persuasion in two ways. First, identity can serve as a persuasive argument that provides issue-relevant information when people think about it. For example, the identity of a source could serve as an issue-relevant argument for a hangout location. That is, if ingroup members advocate a certain hangout location, their endorsement alone could serve as an issue-relevant argument because a central feature of a hangout place is that others central to one's identity (e.g., members of one's important groups) spend time and are welcome there. When people are engaged in effortful thought, making identity features salient also might bias the ongoing elaboration. For example, making identity salient might motivate people to selectively find the flaws in the arguments presented by sources who do not share their group membership (or contained in a message not framed toward an aspect of their self-concept). However, these people might selectively find the strengths in the arguments presented by sources who share their group membership (or contained in a message framed toward an aspect of their self-concept).

Individuals engage in elaborative processing of persuasive information when they are motivated and able to do so. Thus, for example, individuals have been found to elaborate when a message topic is temporarily made personally relevant to them (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1979b), and when there are no distractions present in the persuasion context (e.g., Petty, Wells, & Brock, 1976). If an individual is not motivated or is unable to attend to information in a persuasive message, then persuasion can still take place through minimal central route processing (e.g., processing only the first argument in a persuasive message) or by other qualitatively different processes that often depend on the presence of relatively simple cues in the persuasion context. Attitudes can be changed through this peripheral route through mere identification with a source without consideration of the merits of what the source has to say (Kelman, 1958, 1961), simple associations (e.g., as in classical conditioning; Staats & Staats, 1958; arm flexion-extension; Cacioppo, Priester, & Berntson, 1993), or the use of simple decision rules stored in memory (e.g., heuristics such as, "If the attitude object is associated with an aspect of my identity, it must be good;" Chaiken, 1987). Thus, when the elaboration likelihood is low in a specific context (e.g., when the personal relevance of the issue is low, and there are many distractions), identity, to the extent that it has any impact at all, would likely influence attitudes by serving as a peripheral cue. For example, under low elaboration conditions, individuals might agree with a source of the same group membership more than a source of a different group membership, even when source group membership is not relevant to the issue (e.g., in an advertisement for an unfamiliar dessert). This might occur because individuals want to identify with (i.e., maintain a satisfying relationship with) the source through agreement and not because the merits of what the source has said were considered.

Thus far, three roles that variables can have in persuasion processes have been outlined. Variables can serve (1) as persuasive arguments, (2) to bias thinking or attention to arguments, or (3) as a persuasive cue. According to the ELM, a fourth possible role exists. Variables can serve to determine the amount of elaboration. That is, they can serve to motivate or enable an individual to engage in thinking about a persuasive message. Put differently, many variables are capable of moderating the route to persuasion, either central or peripheral. Some variables, such as personal relevance (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979b), and need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), help to determine a person's level of motivation to elaborate. Other variables, such as message repetition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1989), and distraction (Petty et al., 1976), determine message recipients' ability to elaborate. Identity might serve to determine message recipients' motivation to elaborate by determining the personal relevance of the message, or it might determine their ability to elaborate by determining whether information relevant to evaluating the message (e.g., knowledge about identity-relevant issues) is called to mind.

One of the most important features of the ELM is that any one variable can serve in multiple roles in persuasion. That is, a variable can serve as a peripheral cue in one context, as an argument in another, to motivate thinking in a third, and to bias thinking in a fourth. For example, source attractiveness has been found to: (1) serve as a peripheral cue when it was irrelevant to evaluating the merits of the attitude object (a typewriter), and the motivation to elaborate was low (Haugtvedt, Petty, Cacioppo, & Steidley, 1988); (2) motivate thinking about a persuasive message when the elaboration likelihood was not constrained to be high or low (Puckett, Petty, Cacioppo, & Fisher, 1983); and (3) serve as an argument when it was relevant to evaluating the merits of the attitude object (a new shampoo) and the elaboration likelihood was high (Petty & Cacioppo, 1980). Identity would serve in these multiple roles in similar situations. That is, identity would be most likely to serve as a peripheral cue when the elaboration likelihood was low, serve as an argument (if relevant to judging the attitude object) or bias processing when the elaboration likelihood was high, and determine the extent of processing when other factors have not already constrained the recipient's processing to be high or low (see Petty & Wegener, 1998).
Use of Argument Quality and Thought Listings in Uncovering Persuasion Processes

A manipulation of the quality of arguments contained in a persuasive message and a measure of thoughts generated during message exposure are two convergent methods of determining the route, central or peripheral, through which persuasion has taken place, and, in turn, the role a variable has served in the persuasion process (see Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, for a description of the method by which messages differing in argument quality are generated, and additional procedures to assess the extent of elaboration). Individuals engaged in elaborative processing have been found to be more persuaded and to report more positive thoughts in response to strong than weak messages, whereas those relying on peripheral cues are less influenced in their attitudes and thoughts by message quality (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981).

If the variable of interest is serving as a peripheral cue, then its effect on attitudes should occur regardless of argument quality. That is, a main effect of the variable on attitudes should be found, unmoderated by argument quality. In addition, the variable should have a direct effect on attitudes, unmediated by recipients' thoughts. If the variable serves to determine the extent of elaboration, then one should see a greater differentiation of both attitudes and thoughts at the level of the variable eliciting greater thinking than at the level of the variable eliciting less thinking (i.e., a two-way interaction between the variable and argument quality should be obtained). If a variable is serving to bias elaboration, a main effect of a variable on attitudes and thoughts should occur, and the variable's effect on attitudes should be mediated by thoughts.²

Consequences Associated With Different Attitude Change Processes

Finally, the process through which persuasion occurs (i.e., through the central or peripheral route) has been shown to have several consequences for the resulting attitudes. Specifically, attitudes formed or changed through the central route are relatively strong in that they exhibit greater persistence over time (e.g., Hagtvedt & Petty, 1992), resistance to counterpersuasive information (e.g., Hagtvedt & Wegener, 1994), and attitude-behavior correspondence (e.g., Cacioppo, Petty, Kao, & Rodriguez, 1986), than attitudes resulting from peripheral route processes, which induce relatively weak attitudes (see Petty, Hagtvedt, & Smith, 1995, for a review). Thus, the process through which persuasion occurs and the role a variable serves in persuasion are important. To return to our original voting example, attitudes impacted upon by identity are more likely to guide voting behavior at the polls when they have been formed through the central route than through the peripheral route.

IDENTITY PROCESSES IN THE ELM

Identity Under Conditions of Low Elaboration Likelihood

If an individual has relatively low motivation and ability to process a persuasive message, then identity, to the extent that it has any effect at all, could serve as a peripheral cue. Some early investigators of the effect of shared characteristics (i.e., similarity) on persuasion assumed that all identity-induced attitude change occurred through simple associations. That is, in ELM terminology, some prior theories postulated that shared characteristics always served the role of a peripheral cue in persuasion. In addition, these theories explicitly proposed that identity-induced persuasion did not lead to long-lasting attitude change but was context specific (e.g., lasted only as long as the similar source was present, Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Kelman, 1958, 1961). This proposal, of course, is consistent with the ELM-postulated consequences of peripheral change.

Following the framework provided by the ELM, we propose that if identity is serving as a cue, it should lead to more favorable attitudes (i.e., serve as a positive cue) when the identity implications of the persuasive situation match that of the message recipient (e.g., the source, message, topic, or context share or are relevant to the identity of the message recipient) than when the identity implications of the persuasive situation are not salient. In the same vein, identity should lead to less favorable attitudes (i.e., serve as a negative cue) when the identity implications of the message explicitly mismatch that of the message recipient (e.g., the source, message, topic, or context share or are relevant to the identity of some group with whom the individual disidentifies) than when the identity implications of the persuasive message are not salient.

Two recent investigations support the view that shared group membership with a source can serve as a peripheral cue in persuasion when the elaboration likelihood is relatively low. In one set of conditions of an experiment...
using a topic that was irrelevant to the ingroup (acid rain in the northeastern United States for ingroup University of California at Santa Barbara [UCSB] students), Mackie, Worth, and Asuncion (1990) found that individuals tended to be more persuaded by an ingroup (a fellow UCSB student) than an outgroup (a University of New Hampshire [UNH] student) source when the source’s issue position was stated before the message, regardless of the quality of the arguments contained in the communication. Results for participants’ thoughts also were consistent with the interpretation that the persuasion observed was peripheral (i.e., nonthoughtful), as under these same conditions, participants’ thought listings did not reliably predict their attitudes in response to the message by either the ingroup or outgroup source. Thus, it appears that an ingroup source served as a positive peripheral cue when the persuasive message was about a topic that was irrelevant to the ingroup, and the source’s issue position was stated before the message. This finding was replicated in one set of conditions in a second investigation (Mackie, Gastardo-Conaco, & Skelly, 1992). This study found a marginal main effect for source group membership on attitudes, suggesting that the ingroup source tended to be more persuasive than the outgroup source when the source’s issue positions were presented before persuasive messages about topics which were irrelevant to both the ingroup and outgroup (handgun control and euthanasia for ingroup UCSB and outgroup University of Manitoba students). It is plausible to suggest that the elaboration likelihood under these conditions was low. Specifically, a topic that was irrelevant to the ingroup was presumably of low relevance to message recipients. In addition, message recipients did not need to scrutinize the message to discern the source’s position since the position was clearly stated before the arguments were presented.

A third investigation provides support for the notion that personal identity also can serve as a peripheral cue in persuasion, when the topic is identity-irrelevant and the source issue-position is stated before the message. DeBono (1987) presented recipients with a message containing arguments on both sides of an issue but told recipients that one position (i.e., the mentally ill should be institutionalized) was consistent with an aspect of their self-concept (i.e., value or image-driven, for low and high self-monitors, respectively). Following exposure to the message, recipients expressed more agreement with the side they had been told was consistent with their identity than the other side of the issue. In addition, this study found that message-relevant thoughts were equally predictive of attitudes regardless of identity match, and these attitude results were replicated in a second study when no messages were presented to process (i.e., recipients simply were told which side was associated with their identity), suggesting that the message frame was capable of changing attitudes through a peripheral process.

These findings that individuals use information associated with an aspect of the self-concept as a guide in forming their own attitudes about identity-irrelevant issues rules out a possible explanation for why a match between persuasion setting and recipient characteristic can serve as a positive peripheral cue. Specifically, it does not appear that a match between persuasion setting and recipient characteristic serves as a cue because matched messages are necessarily seen to be more informative about the issue than mismatched messages. In fact, the Mackie et al. (1990) investigation suggests that an ingroup source (i.e., matched message) can serve as a cue even when the outgroup (i.e., mismatched message) might be expected to be more knowledgeable about the topic (i.e., acid rain in the northeast when the outgroup source was a UNH student). This research also suggests the conditions under which a match between persuasion setting and recipient characteristic can serve as a peripheral cue (i.e., on identity-irrelevant topics, when the issue position is stated before the message). However, although these findings suggest why a match between persuasion setting and recipient characteristic does not serve as a peripheral cue (i.e., it is not because the matched message is seen as more informative), they do not provide direct evidence as to why a match between persuasion setting and recipient characteristic does serve as a peripheral cue.

We conducted an experiment to investigate whether identity with the group rather than group membership per se is important in producing cue effects for ingroups. Specifically, if identification is the mechanism for why a match between a persuasion feature (such as an ingroup source) and a recipient characteristic affects persuasion as a peripheral cue, then a group membership match per se should not necessarily lead to greater persuasion under low elaboration conditions. Rather, an ingroup source should be relatively more effective only for individuals who strongly identify with that particular ingroup—that is, those who have chosen the group as an identity (for a similar view, see Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). If shared group membership alone is sufficient for the cue effect, then strength of identification should not matter.

To provide preliminary evidence regarding the hypothesis that shared group membership with a source would serve as a peripheral cue for those who highly identify with the group more than for those who are less identified with the group, college undergraduates who were either high or low in identification with their fellow undergraduates (Ohio State University [OSU] undergraduate students) as measured by the identity subscale of the Collective Self-Esteem scale (CSES; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) were recruited for a study (Fleming & Petty, 1997a). Participants were told the attitudes of both ingroup members (OSU students) and outgroup members (either University of Michigan students or Pennsylvania State University students) were differentially informative to different identity groups (i.e., OSU students and Pennsylvania State University students), and their attitudes about an issue (acid rain) were expressed in the message. In addition, participants were told that the source was either an OSU student or a Pennsylvania State University student, and they were told that the source was either a fellow OSU student or a Pennsylvania State University student. This served as a manipulation check for the identity group judgments. The results indicated that when the source was an OSU student and the message was informative, participants more strongly agreed with the source, regardless of source issue position, and regardless of their level of identity with the university. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that an ingroup source can serve as a peripheral cue even when the topic is identity-irrelevant and the source issue-position is stated before the message.
...dents) about eight consumer products and then were asked to report their attitudes toward the products. The attitudes of ingroup members and outgroup members were always opposing. That is, if the ingroup was positive toward a product, the outgroup was negative. The eight items were chosen out of a larger set of products because they were shown in pretesting to be the most neutral (i.e., pretest participants reported attitudes that were closest to zero). Ingroup and outgroup attitudes were said to be an average of +2 or -2 on a scale ranging from +5 (very good) to -5 (very bad), and participants reported their attitudes on the same scale. Elaboration likelihood was kept low by deliberately not providing participants with any additional information about the products, other than the attitudes of ingroup and outgroup members, and by using attitude objects about which they had little or no previous knowledge (i.e., “new and revived products”: banana-flavored Cheerios; balloon artwork; purple datebooks; theater in the round; painted barrettes; sitcom about orphaned children; reruns of the TV show “Get Smart”; and a plastic car antenna). These attitude objects were also chosen to be irrelevant to either the ingroup or outgroups. Thus, the experiment replicated the set of conditions under which shared group membership has previously been found to act as a peripheral cue. In sum, the only information participants had available on which to base their judgments was the attitudes of ingroup and outgroup members. The design of the experiment was a 2 (identification with ingroup: High vs. low) X 2 (ingroup attitude: Favorable vs. unfavorable) factorial, with one between and one within-participant factor.

Participants’ attitudes toward the four objects for which the ingroup attitude was favorable and their attitudes toward the four objects for which the ingroup attitude was unfavorable were each averaged for each participant, resulting in two composite attitude scores. A two-way mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with one between- and one within-participant factor conducted on these scores revealed two main effects. First, those high in identification reported more favorable attitudes ($M = .70$) than did those low in identification ($M = -1.20$), $F(1, 22) = 6.65, p < .05$. Second, the attitudes of participants were more favorable when the ingroup attitude was positive ($M = .51$) than negative ($M = -.60$), $F(1, 22) = 12.38, p < .01$. More importantly, these main effects were qualified by the anticipated interaction, $F(2, 22) = 4.53, p < .05$ (see Fig. 10.1). This interaction suggested that whereas participants who were high in identification with the ingroup were more persuaded when the ingroup position was positive ($M = 1.16$) than when the ingroup position was negative ($M = -.46$), $F(1, 13) = 15.77, p < .01$, the attitudes of those who were low in identification with the ingroup were not affected by ingroup position ($M_{ingroup\ positive} = -.80, M_{ingroup\ negative} = -.80, F(1, 9) = 1.20, p = .30, n.s.$).

These findings provide initial evidence that individual differences in the level of identification with the ingroup moderates when an ingroup source serves as a peripheral cue. Specifically, those high in identification with the ingroup reported more favorable attitudes when the ingroup attitude was favorable toward the attitude object than when the ingroup attitude was unfavorable. On the other hand, those low in identification with the ingroup did not appear to use the ingroup position as a cue in determining their attitudes. Their attitudes were not more favorable when the ingroup position was favorable than when it was unfavorable.

Identity Under Conditions of High Elaboration Likelihood

In stark contrast to when the elaboration likelihood is low, when the elaboration likelihood is high, individuals are motivated and able to process the issue-relevant arguments presented and evaluate their merits. According to
the ELM, under high elaboration conditions, identity can serve two roles. First, identity can serve as an argument for the merits of the attitude object if it is relevant to the perceived merits of the object, such as in our previous example of perceiving an ingroup source as a favorable argument for a hang out location. In this example, it is assumed that identification with the source was explicitly relevant to the merits of the attitude object and thus could be used as an item of issue-relevant information. Identity can play a second role in persuasion under high elaboration conditions, even if it is substantively irrelevant to the merits of the attitude object. Specifically, it can bias the thoughts that are generated in response to a persuasive message.

This biased processing explanation has been offered as one account for why messages that match the functional basis of one’s attitude are more persuasive than messages that do not match. For example, Lavine and Snyder (1996) found that messages with content that matched an aspect of the recipients’ personal identity (i.e., image arguments for high self-monitors, and quality appeals for low self-monitors) elicited more favorable thoughts and were rated as more persuasive than did messages with content that mismatched recipients’ personal identities. In addition, thoughts and ratings of persuasiveness were found to mediate the impact of identity-match on post-message attitudes. Consistent with the prediction of the ELM that a variable will serve to bias elaboration under high elaboration likelihood conditions, Lavine and Snyder (1996) suggested that it was likely that in their research “processing motivation was relatively high” (p. 600).

To examine whether identity serves to bias message processing, we designed a study based on the procedure Lord, Ross, and Lepper (1979) developed to examine bias. Lord et al. (1979) exposed participants who initially either supported or opposed capital punishment to two studies on capital punishment, one seemingly confirming and one disconfirming their existing attitude. They found that participants rated the report that supported their attitude as more convincing than the report disconfirming their belief and reported corresponding attitude change in the direction of their initial attitude (i.e., attitude polarization). Lord et al. (1979) interpreted these results as suggesting that individuals evaluated the evidence presented in a biased manner, accepting evidence confirming their initial attitude at face value but criticizing and finding flaws in evidence disconfirming their initial attitude. However, unlike Lavine and Snyder (1996), Lord et al. (1979) did not obtain evidence that such biased message processing occurred (e.g., in thought listings) but rather showed biased outcomes in the form of judgments of the evidence presented on each side of the issue and reports of attitude change. Thus, there are several possible explanations for Lord et al.’s results. That is, the biased outcomes could have resulted from (a) favorably biased processing of the confirming or unfavorably biased processing of the disconfirming evidence; (b) increased objective processing (e.g., due to greater personal relevance) of only the confirming information which would lead to enhanced persuasion if the arguments were strong; or (c) using one’s prior attitude as a cue to judge the worth of the evidence on each side without extensive scrutiny of it.

In our experiment, we attempted to demonstrate two points. First, we attempted to replicate and extend the findings of Lord et al. (1979) and Lavine and Snyder (1996) by investigating whether identity could lead to a biased attitudinal outcome. Specifically, we investigated whether associating some information with message recipients’ ingroup but associating other conflicting information with message recipients’ outgroup would lead to a biased attitudinal outcome in the direction supported by the information associated with the ingroup. Second, we examined whether this effect would be most apparent for those who were highly identified with the ingroup. Third, we attempted to tease apart the mechanism for the effect.

In our study, male and female college undergraduates who were either high or low in identification with their gender group (males or females, respectively) as measured by the identity subscale of the CSES (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) were presented with two messages of equal strength about a product, one positive and one negative (Fleming & Petty, 1997b). Background elaboration likelihood was kept relatively high by keeping the persuasion context free from distraction and explicitly instructing participants that (a) they had ample time to complete the study (they had only one brief packet to complete during the session), and (b) they would be asked about their reactions to the persuasive messages contained in the booklet. Hastie and Park (1986) found that informing individuals they will be asked to make an evaluative judgment before they receive information elicits online elaboration, whereas informing individuals about the judgment after they receive information elicits memory-based processing. In addition, it was thought that telling participants they would be asked to answer questions about the messages would elicit at least a moderate level of accountability, which has been found to increase elaboration (e.g., Petty, Harkins, & Williams, 1980; Tetlock, 1983). Once they had been exposed to the persuasive messages, participants were asked to report their attitudes toward the product and the thoughts they had while reading the messages.

Of the two messages that participants received, one message described women’s reactions to the product and one described men’s reactions (e.g., “Snickerdoodles are [wo]men’s favorite snack food.” “[Wo]men are concerned that snickerdoodles are unhealthy.”). This identity framing was counterbalanced across message valence. Thus, each message recipient (male or female) received two messages consisting of either (a) one message giving the reasons why women were positive towards the product and one giv-
ing the reasons why men were negative, or (b) one message giving the reasons why women were negative towards the product and one giving the reasons why men were positive. Pretesting of the positive and negative messages, without the identity framing, revealed that each message was equally persuasive and elicited the same proportion of thoughts equal in valence to the message valence (i.e., positive attitudes and thoughts in response to the positive message and negative attitudes and thoughts in response to the negative message that were as discrepant from neutrality in an unfavorable direction as the positive attitudes and thoughts were in a favorable direction).

Thus, if participants engaged in objective processing of both the positive and negative messages, regardless of identity framing, they should report relatively neutral attitudes and the same number of positive as negative thoughts. However, if participants engaged in biased processing, then a two-way interaction between participant gender and identity frame should be obtained on both the attitude and thought measures, indicating that identity framing biased thoughts as well as attitude outcomes. Specifically, men should be more persuaded and report a greater proportion of positive thoughts when the positive message is framed for men than women, and women should be more persuaded and report a greater proportion of positive thoughts when the positive message is framed for women than men. Finally, if biased processing of identity-framed information is due to identification with the ingroup, then a three-way interaction of participant gender, identity frame, and identification with gender should be found on the attitude and thought measures, indicating that biased processing and a biased attitudinal outcome is greater for highly identified individuals than those who are relatively unidentified with their gender.

Participants reported their attitudes on five attitude scales (one 11-point scale and four semantic differentials), with higher numbers on each indicating more positive attitudes. Responses to the five attitude items were standardized and averaged for each participant. To provide a more sensitive test of moderation by identification level, analyses were conducted including only those whose level of identification with gender fell in the top or bottom quartile of scores of those who participated in the experiment. Thus, a 2 (Participant gender: Male vs. female) X 2 (Identity framing: Men positive vs. women positive) X 2 (Message order: Positive first vs. negative first) X 2 (Identification with gender: Highest vs. lowest) ANOVA was conducted on the resulting attitude index. This analysis revealed a significant three-way interaction, $F(1, 62) = 10.82, p < .01$. (see Fig. 10.2) This interaction was examined by analyzing the Participant gender X Identity framing interactions for high and low identified participants separately.

For participants who were highly identified with their gender, a two-way interaction of Gender X Identity framing was found, $F(1, 34) = 11.80, p < .01$ (see Fig. 10.2, top). This interaction showed that whereas men were more persuaded when the positive message was framed for men ($M = .57$) than women ($M = -.27$), women were more persuaded when the positive message was framed for women ($M = .43$) than men ($M = -.58$). For people who were low in identity with their gender, no effects were significant (all $ps > .20$; see Fig. 10.2, bottom). Thus, it appears that a biased attitudinal outcome was produced by identity framing of messages, such that individuals were more persuaded by the identity-matched than the identity-mismatched message framing.

![Fig. 10.2. Effect of gender, gender identification, and message type on attitudes.](image-url)
messages, and that this biased outcome occurred primarily for highly identified individuals.

To determine whether this biased attitudinal outcome was due to biased elaboration, a thought positivity index was created by subtracting the number of negative from the number of positive thoughts for each participant and dividing by their total number of thoughts. Thus, higher numbers indicated a greater proportion of positive thoughts about the product. Analysis of this measure produced a marginal three-way interaction, $F(1, 61) = 2.78$, $p < .10$. Separate analyses of the Participant gender X Identity framing interaction for high and low identified participants revealed that, paralleling the attitude data, the two-way interaction of Participant gender X Identity framing was marginal for highly identified participants, $F(1, 33) = 3.19$, $p < .09$. This interaction suggested that whereas men had a greater proportion of positive thoughts when the positive message was framed for men ($M = .19$) than women ($M = -.11$), women had a greater proportion of positive thoughts when the positive message was framed for women ($M = .12$) than men ($M = -.24$). For low identified participants, no effects were significant.

This investigation suggests that identity can serve to bias processing of mixed (i.e., both positive and negative) persuasive information, thus leading to a biased attitudinal outcome. If biased elaboration occurred for at least some of our highly identified participants, there remain four possible explanations that can account for the results of this study and the research by Lavine and Snyder (1996), because there are four general ways in which a variable can bias elaboration. One way is by influencing which of the available pieces of issue-relevant information in the persuasion context is attended to and elaborated. If some information in a persuasion context is associated with an identity, but other information in the same context is not (as occurred in both experimental paradigms), the former might be given greater attention than the latter. This situation could lead to a biased outcome through objective processing of only part of the available information. The bias would be in the selective attention given to some information over other equally available information. If evidence of both sides of an issue is equally strong, people would mostly notice the strength of the information they chose to process (see subsequent discussion of identity and extent of processing). In this study (and in that of Lord et al., 1979), it is possible that highly identified recipients elaborated the information that was framed for ingroup members more than the information framed for outgroup members and thus were more persuaded by it.

A second way a variable can bias elaboration is to bias the type or direction of thoughts that come to mind, that is, to bias the elaboration itself. As suggested by others (Mackie et al., 1990), perception of shared identity might affect the type of thoughts that come to mind most quickly; specifically, it might increase the accessibility of category- or trait-relevant information. Because neither the topic used in our study nor that used by Lavine and Snyder (1996) were relevant to the aspect of the self-concept being appealed to, this explanation seems less plausible.

In addition, however, identity might motivate a certain direction of thoughts in response to a message. Perception of shared identity might lead to predominantly favorable thoughts in response to a message (bolstering), while perception of unshared identity might lead to predominantly unfavorable thoughts (counterarguing), leading to a biased attitudinal outcome. This type of biased processing should be especially evident if message arguments are somewhat ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations (e.g., either positive or negative), and the message recipient does not have highly accessible attitudes and beliefs about the attitude object that are counter to the position of the identity-matched message (see Petty, Schumann, Richman, & Strathman, 1993, for an example of mood biasing elaboration under these conditions; see Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994, for an example of source expertise biasing elaboration under these conditions). It is plausible that, in our study, an appeal to identity with ingroup-framed versus outgroup-framed messages biased the direction of the thoughts of highly identified individuals (see also Cacioppo, Petty, & Sidera, 1982). For example, individuals might have thought about both messages but were motivated to agree with the ingroup (and/or disagree with the outgroup) source because they wanted to identify with the ingroup, leading them to have thoughts that were predominantly biased in a direction consistent with the ingroup framed position and in disagreement with the outgroup framed position.

The final two possible explanations for the results obtained are that biased elaboration could have occurred in response to the matched message only (i.e., bolstering of matched arguments but no counterarguing of mismatched arguments), or that biased elaboration occurred in response to the mismatched message only (i.e., counterarguing of mismatched arguments, but no bolstering of matched arguments). Each of the four possible ways of engaging in biased elaboration would result in the pattern of results obtained; that is, more positive attitudes and thoughts in response to the matched than mismatched message. Future research is needed to determine which of these processes is responsible for the biased attitudinal outcomes we have observed for group identity.

### Identity Under Conditions of Moderate Elaboration Likelihood

Often, the elaboration likelihood is not constrained to be high or low by other variables in the persuasion context, such as personal relevance or distraction. When the elaboration likelihood is moderate, identity is predicted...
to influence the extent of elaboration. This enhanced thinking could be relatively objective, or it could be biased as explained previously. This prediction differs from the theories of Conover (1988) and van Knippenberg and Wilke (1992), which predict that identity influences the amount of thinking in which recipients engage, regardless of the elaboration likelihood, and do not postulate other roles for identity. Recent studies by Mackie et al. (1990), Mackie et al. (1992), and Petty and Wegener (1998b), have shown that, under moderate elaboration likelihood conditions, a match between persuasion setting and recipient characteristic can determine the extent of thinking rather than serve as a peripheral cue. Specifically, it appears that individuals process a persuasive message that is matched with an aspect of their self-concept more than a message that is mismatched with an aspect of their self-concept.

First, Mackie et al. (1990) found that, when participants were exposed to a message from an ingroup source (a fellow UCSB student) or an outgroup source (a distant UNH student) about an ingroup-relevant topic (oil drilling off the southwestern coast of the United States), a two-way interaction of source group membership and argument quality on postmessage attitudes occurred. This interaction revealed that individuals showed greater attitudinal differentiation in response to strong than weak arguments presented by an ingroup than an outgroup source. In addition, they found that the favorability of participants' thoughts as assessed by a thought-listing predicted the extent of pre- to postmessage attitude change for participants who had been exposed to the message by an ingroup source but did not predict the extent of attitude change for those who received the message by an outgroup source. Thus, it appears that participants processed a message by an ingroup source more than an outgroup source when the topic was ingroup-relevant. Importantly, and consistent with the ELM, shared group membership served to determine elaboration likelihood when the background elaboration likelihood was relatively moderate (an ingroup-relevant topic, source issue-position stated before the message), but, as reviewed in the previous section, served as a peripheral cue when the background elaboration likelihood was relatively low (an ingroup-irrelevant topic, source issue-position stated before the message). In one set of conditions in a second investigation, Mackie et al. (1992) found that greater processing of an ingroup-irrelevant message from an ingroup versus outgroup source can occur when the advocated position is stated after the message. Under these conditions, people must process the message to determine the position taken by the ingroup member. Thus, the ingroup position cannot easily be used as a cue when it is not stated prior to the message arguments.

Two studies by Petty and Wegener (1998b) suggest that a personal identity-appeal can also increase the extent of message processing under conditions of moderate elaboration likelihood. They gave strong or weak persuasive messages about four products (a shampoo, coat, shoe, and toothpaste) to high or low self-monitors that either matched an aspect of their self-concept (image arguments for high self-monitors and quality arguments for low self-monitors) or mismatched an aspect of their self-concept (quality arguments for high self-monitors and image arguments for low self-monitors). The persuasive messages contained pieces of information about the products and did not contain a summary position statement. They found greater differentiation of attitudes in response to strong and weak arguments when the message matched rather than mismatched recipient personal identity, especially when elaboration likelihood was not at a ceiling (i.e., for low but not high need for cognition individuals; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Thus, the existing literature provides evidence that both group and personal identity-appeals can determine elaboration likelihood when the likelihood of thinking is not constrained to be high or low by other variables.

A match between persuasion setting and recipient characteristic can lead to increased processing because it increases the motivation to process, the ability to process, or both. Specifically, consistent with Festinger (1950) and Turner (1982, 1991; Turner & Oakes, 1989), Mackie et al. (1990) suggested that the attitudes of similar others might be more interesting because they provide information about the subjective validity of people's views, increasing motivation to process. It is also possible that matching the persuasion setting with a recipient characteristic increases the personal relevance of the persuasive information, increasing motivation to process (Petty & Cacioppo, 1990). Alternatively, a match could activate category- or trait-relevant information, increasing the ability to process other category- or trait-relevant information contained in the message. People who strongly identify with a group (or trait) would presumably find information associated with the group or trait to be especially relevant (thereby motivating processing) and might also have more readily accessible information relevant to the group or trait (thereby enabling processing). Future research should explore these issues.

Summary

It appears that there is evidence both across separate studies, and within a single study, for the view that identity, both personal and group, can serve multiple roles in persuasion settings. Specifically, the two studies reported here suggest that identity can serve (a) as a peripheral cue under low elaboration conditions (e.g., Fleming & Petty, 1997a), and (b) to bias elaboration under high elaboration conditions (Fleming & Petty, 1997b). In addition, two investigations by Mackie and her colleagues suggest that shared group
membership, and thus perhaps identity, can serve more than one role in persuasion depending on the elaboration likelihood (Mackie et al., 1990, 1992). Specifically, they showed that shared group membership acted as a cue under low elaboration conditions (when the topic was ingroup-relevant and participants did not have to elaborate the message to determine the ingroup source’s position), and served to motivate processing under moderate elaboration conditions (when the topic was ingroup-relevant, or elaboration was necessary to determine the ingroup source’s position). It seems plausible to suggest that recipients who are highly identified with the ingroup might be especially likely to process information by ingroup more than outgroup sources under these conditions—just as they are more likely to show cue and biased processing effects—but future research will have to verify this.

**FUTURE RESEARCH ON THE MULTIPLE ROLES OF IDENTITY ON PERSUASION**

As described in this chapter, preliminary support for the view that identity can serve in at least three roles in persuasion situations is now available. Even though the existing research provides a coherent yet complex pattern of results, considerable additional work is needed before the multiple roles for identity in persuasion are understood completely. The conceptualization and evidence presented here have emphasized the overall elaboration likelihood of a persuasion context as an important determinant of the process by which identity modifies attitudes.

Other variables not previously applied to this domain also deserve attention as factors influencing identity in its multiple roles in persuasion (i.e., impact on its effectiveness as a peripheral cue, in motivating elaboration, and in serving as an argument, and in biasing elaboration). For example, research suggests that groups that are optimally distinctive induce higher levels of identification than do groups that are too broad or too narrow (Brewer, 1991). Thus, appeals to group identity could be more effective in these roles when the group identity appealed to is one that message recipients feel is optimally distinctive than when the group identity appealed to is either too inclusive or too distinctive. Alternatively, appeals to group identity might be more effective when message recipients themselves are satisfying both the need for affiliation and the need for distinctiveness within a group than when individual message recipients either feel a loss of individuality, or a lack of belonging within a group. Thus, optimal distinctiveness as both a group characteristic and as an additional individual difference variable deserves attention as a factor that can influence the effectiveness of group identity in its multiple roles in persuasion.

In addition to optimal distinctiveness, the studies we described each investigated recipients’ identification with actual group memberships or with traits they actually held. Investigation of whether actually possessing a group membership or trait is a necessary determinant for identity to serve in its multiple roles would be interesting. Specifically, Higgins’ (1989) self-discrepancy theory proposes that discrepancies between the actual self (the qualities or traits one possesses) and the ideal self (the qualities or traits one would ideally like to possess), lead to negative affective states (e.g., sadness, disappointment, and dissatisfaction) and a motivation to attain a match between the actual and ideal selves that is manifested in action or increased information processing about information that might help to reduce the discrepancy. Although Higgins’ theory focuses on discrepancies between ideal and actual traits one holds (i.e., personal identities), discrepancies between the actual group identity of an individual (the extent to which a group membership actually forms part of the self-concept) and her or his ideal group identity (the extent to which an individual would like a group membership to form part of the self-concept) might occur as well. These group identity discrepancies also might motivate individuals to behave, process information, and ultimately adopt attitudes that facilitate attainment of a match between the actual and ideal group identity. If so, it is possible that individuals who are not members of a group or who do not hold a trait (or those who are low in identification with a group membership or trait) but who ideally would like to be highly identified with the group or trait might show the effects outlined here. That is, we might find identity acting as a cue, as an argument, to bias or to motivate processing for those who do not have group membership or a trait or who are low rather than high in actual identification with the particular group or trait (but who would ideally like to be highly identified), because these individuals are motivated to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal identity(ies). Unthinkingly agreeing with those of a particular identity, thinking more about information associated with those of a particular identity, and being positively biased toward information associated with those of a particular identity could each be mechanisms by which low identified individuals or those who do not possess a trait or group membership might strive to attain their preferred identity state.

Thus, both situational (e.g., group optimal distinctiveness) and individual difference (e.g., large actual-ideal identity discrepancy) factors concerning the particular characteristic being appealed to could determine the effectiveness of identity in persuasion. The overview provided here can be viewed as a model answering the question of how identity affects persuasion. One set of questions left to be answered is why identity serves each of its multiple roles in persuasion. Several mechanisms have been proposed in the
literature, and several might operate, one or more for each role. Although we have reviewed a number of possible mechanisms in this chapter to account for why identity serves in the roles that it does, other mechanisms are possible. For example, identity might affect persuasion processes because (a) identity is like a value (e.g., I value my association with this group or trait), and making any value salient might lead to greater persuasion through multiple roles; (b) message recipients hold a belief that similar others' view of reality is more accurate, and any variable associated with greater accuracy will lead to greater persuasion through multiple roles (e.g., Festinger, 1950); (c) similarity of any kind between a source, message, or persuasion context and a message recipient, not just in identity (e.g., in characteristics that do not form part of the self-concept such as owning a green toothbrush, or temporary similarity such as having the same outcome on a particular task), leads to greater persuasion through multiple roles, perhaps through eliciting positive affect; (d) a match of any kind between a persuasion setting and aspect of the message recipient, not just in identity (e.g., between the affective or cognitive nature of an appeal, and the basis of recipients' attitude; Edwards, 1990) leads to greater persuasion through multiple roles, perhaps because the “root” of the attitude is being attacked; (e) liking a source or set of individuals an appeal is framed towards for any reason, not just shared identity, leads to greater persuasion through multiple roles, because we generally feel more comfortable agreeing with those we like (e.g., Heider, 1958); or finally, (f) referencing the self in any way in the persuasion setting (e.g., by embedding the pronoun you instead of one in message arguments; Burnkrant & Unnava, 1989) increases persuasion through multiple roles, through increasing self-relevance. By answering some of the questions remaining regarding the multiple roles of identity in persuasion processes, we gain a clearer understanding of the role our self-concepts (at the group and individual levels) serve in forming and modifying our judgments and in guiding our behavior.

Finally, when addressing the broader question of how the persuasion and identification literatures relate to one another, it becomes evident that the persuasion literature has much to add to our understanding of the psychological mechanisms through which identification itself occurs. Following traditional attitude theory, Deaux (1996) suggested that identification has three components: cognitive (e.g., self-categorization as holding a particular group membership or trait), affective (e.g., the value and emotional significance placed on the particular membership or trait; Tajfel, 1981), and behavioral (e.g., interdependence of action of those sharing the membership or trait). If identity is like an attitude, then it should be possible for identification with a group or personal identity to be reached either through relatively thoughtful or nonthoughtful processes. Identifications that are

adopted through a relatively thoughtful process then might be more likely than identifications adopted through a relatively nonthoughtful process to persist over time, resist counterattack (e.g., appeals to disidentify and/or adopt a different identity), and predict behavior.