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# A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity: The Case of National Identity as an Example

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*The present article delineates the complex structure of collective identity by incorporating two levels of analysis. The first, the micro level, pertains to individual society members' recognition of and categorization as belonging to a group, with the accompanying cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences. The second, the macro level, pertains to the notion of collective identity that denotes the shared awareness by constituents of a society of being members of a collective. This level is founded on two pillars: One pillar consists of generic features that characterize the collective identity. These features apply to macro-level collectives and allow a comparison among them. The other pillar is particular and consists of content characteristics that provide the unique features of the collective identity. The conceptual framework is applied to the analysis of the national collective identity as a case example. The contributions and implications of the described conception are discussed.*

**Keywords:** social identity; collective; collective identity; national identity

Academic research in the social and human sciences has been dealing intensively over the past decades with the subject of identity—both from the personal aspects of individual selfhood (Bauman, 1995; Baumeister, 1987; Erikson, 1963; Glover, 1989; Honess & Yardley, 1987; Ricoeur, 1992) and the collective aspect, which concerns social groups (Cerulo, 1997; Howard, 2000; Mellucci, 1989; Tajfel, 1981).<sup>1</sup> This deserved renaissance is not coincidental but rather is closely related to the public, political, and social debates that are taking place within societies coping with problems and dilemmas of identity (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Glazer, 1997; Jenkins & Sofos, 1996; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). This growing public and academic interest originated from

changes that have been taking place in social, economic, and political national structures, in the mobility of social groups, in immigration trends, in interethnic relations, and in the nature of economic production, consumption, and technology. In viewing this growing interest, we would like to point out that in the premodern era *identity* constituted neither an individual psychological problem nor a social “issue” (Taylor, 1994). The significance of identity emerged in modernity, as human beings started to move from one place to another, to associate with new social groups, to simultaneously become members in a wide variety of groups, and to make contentions on the basis of their identity. It was then that *identity* became a relevant and useful term for explaining various social, political, and cultural processes. It has become an “issue” to which individuals and societies must attend, and it has emerged as a subject of conceptual analysis and empirical research.

Observers have claimed that the Western world has been shifting to a new *postmodern* era. Two clashing phenomena characterize this change: The first is *globalization*, which leads to the amalgamation of earlier national identities and the creation of transnational identities (e.g., Herrmann, Risse, & Brewer, 2004; Papastergiadis, 2000). This process of “deterritorialization,” which is greatly

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enhanced by the activities of the transnational corporations, is especially salient among young generations who are exposed to the global media, are connected to global networks of communication and knowledge, and as a result have similar experiences (Arnett, 2002). The second phenomenon, by contrast, is *localization*, which means an increase in the importance of subnational identities (cultural, ethnic, gender, etc.) because of increases in global immigration and the creation of large immigrant communities. Deaux (2006) and Moghaddam (2008) provided sociopsychological explanations for these simultaneous, contradicting processes.

In view of the above-noted social, political, economic, cultural, and demographic changes, both the individual and the collective find it currently difficult to define themselves as cohesive entities and are inclined to perceive themselves as a medley of contrasts (Bhabha, 1990; Calhoun, 1997-1998; Hall, 1997a, 1997b). This is the backdrop for growing research and vigorous public debates on issues of identity. In spite of the extensive preoccupation with identity, we believe that there is still a need to clarify its meanings at the individual and collective levels and also to integrate and elaborate them. Thus, the present article attempts to clarify the meanings of collective identity by incorporating both micro and macro levels of analysis (Bar-Tal, 2006): The first level applies to the individual process of identification, whereas the other level applies to the meaning of collective identity among the large-scale collectives and societies such as ethnic groups, social movements, or nations. Thus, we hope to deconstruct the elements of each level and provide a complex view of them. In turn, this deconstruction will make possible evaluation and assessment of each of the elements as well as presentation of complex interrelationships, interactions, and synthesis that exist among them. This accomplishment will hopefully contribute to the elaboration and illumination of social and collective identity. We first present the basic concepts of identity, followed by a description of the unit of the collective analysis selected as an example for the present article—the ethnic-nation. The bulk of the article, subsequently, delineates the proposed levels of sociopsychological conception of collective identity that can be applied beyond the analysis of national identity to other collective entities such as religious groups or political movements. Finally, various implications of the presented conceptual framework are elaborated.

### **SOCIAL IDENTITY AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: CONCEPTIONS**

Though personal social identity is strongly linked with the identity of the groups in which one participates (Erikson, 1959, 1968; Hammack, 2008; Stryker, 1980),

our focus is on the collective aspect of identity. As we begin this analysis, the theory of social identity (R. Brown, 2000b; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is our starting point.

#### *Social Identity*

Social identity theory distinguishes between personal and social identity: The former is based on the unique features and characteristics of the individual; the latter, quite the opposite, constitutes “that part of the self-concept of the individual that derives from his knowledge about his membership in a social group(s), and from the value and the emotional meaning that accompany this membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). Social identity is formulated through two processes: The first is cognitive and includes the categorization of individuals into groups, the categorization of the self into a group or groups, attributions of meaning, and the characterization of external groups. The second is motivational, that is, the desire to differentiate between one’s own group and other groups. This results in a systematic preference for the norms, values, and behaviors of one’s own group over those of external groups.

Self-categorization theory (Turner, 1991, 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oaks, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) expands the cognitive basis of social identity by proposing the operation of basic principles of categorization and asserting that this entails a process of depersonalization, namely, that individuals may define themselves as interchangeable exemplars of a social category rather than as unique personalities. This process is dependent on the relative salience of different levels of self-categorization in a specific situation. Thus, the theory suggests a psychological foundation for making an individual part of a social group in a given context.

Social identity constitutes a foundation for a variety of social effects, from humans’ ability to feel, act, and think as members of a social group to intergroup behaviors such as discrimination, confrontation, and cooperation (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Hogg, 1992; Huddy, 2001). It provides substance to the notion of a socially structured field within the individual. It thereby serves as a foundation for the explanation of how large numbers of people can be mobilized and then act in coherent and meaningful ways on the basis of a shared social reality reflected in group norms, values, and understandings (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, in press).

#### *Collective Identity*

We seek here to explore the interrelationship between micro-individual and macro-social meanings of identity. As the micro level has already been well detailed, we carry this task by focusing on the macro-sociopsychological

nature of collective identity, its components and characteristics, and shifts in its features over time, with the analysis of national identity as an example. Therefore, the concept *collective identity* is employed to designate the identity of the group as a whole, similar to what Durkheim indicated by the term *collective consciousness* and Marx by *class consciousness* (Snow, 2001), that is, the notion of we-ness that transcends the individuals and leads to a collective action. Despite the immense difference between their theories, these two classical theoreticians analyzed society as being more than an aggregate of individuals. Collectives (whether it be the functional society in Durkheim's theory or the oppressed class in Marx's) are established and social interactions can be carried out when individuals acknowledge their membership in the collective, are aware of being together with others in this collective, and accept the imposition on themselves of some form of shared values and norms (Durkheim, 1964; Marx, 1975).

So the term *collective identity* in this sense indicates a joint awareness and recognition that members of a group share the same social identity (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Klandermans & de Weerd, 2000; Mellucci, 1989; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). In essence, it reflects the notion of imagining an existence of a collective (Anderson, 1983). This has important implications for group members as individuals and for the group as a whole. It may influence the nature of the shared social reality that group members construct, the sense of solidarity and unity they experience, the intensity of group members' involvement, the extent of their mobilization, the conformity expected of them, the pressure they exert on leaders to proceed in line with shared views, and the direction of actions taken by the group (Bar-Tal, 2000). We thus suggest that this macro-level analysis is based on the assumption that collective action can be understood as the result of an emerging collective definition of identity.

*National identity as an example.* Although the term *collective* refers to various kinds of social entities, in our illustrative discussion of collective identity we focus on an ethnic-nation as an example because of the important role that nations play in the lives of both individuals and collectives (see, e.g., Connor, 1994; Gellner, 1983; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Smith, 1986, 1991). Nationalism—as an identity, an ideology, and a practice—is a major social phenomenon in the modern era. The national-ethnic group is defined as “a named human population occupying a historic territory or homeland and sharing common myths and memories; a mass, public culture; a single economy” and having “common rights and duties for all members” (Smith, 2000, p. 3).<sup>2</sup>

We are aware of the ongoing controversy about the definition of the ethnic group and its relations to the nationality. In this debate, the primordial paradigm emphasizes the continuity of the identity components over the generations as being essential and diminishes the value of the changes occurring in these components (Armstrong, 1982; Connor, 1994; Geertz, 1973; Seton-Watson, 1977; Shils, 1975; Van Den Berghe, 1978). The other paradigm is the constructivist (known in nationalism research as modernistic), according to which ethnic identity is the result of continual social construction (Brubaker, 2004; Nagel, 1994). It emphasizes the notion of nations as being modern collectives as well as the ways of imagination and cultural invention, by means of which the elites act to create a uniform national awareness among the masses (Anderson, 1983; Breuilly, 1982; Deutsch, 1966; Gellner, 1983; Giddens, 1985; Hobsbawm, 1992).

In this article, we adopt Smith's interim approach, for two main reasons. First, his theory enables the positioning, at the center of the research, of the human being as an active subject and human society as a group of subjects in line with the sociopsychological approach. Second, Smith's theory sheds light on the dynamics constantly occurring between the influence of the past on the present and the future and between the influences of the present on the perceptions of the past. His definition highlights the significant linkage between premodern ethnic communities (“ethnies,” in Smith's terminology) and the creation of modern nations and focuses on the dynamics between continuity and change of nations.

Nationalism as a political ideology is a modern phenomenon, but national identities were not created out of nothing. Many national identities' origins are rooted in premodern ethnic identities, which are defined largely by their common name, ancestry myths, and historical memories, which furnish explanations regarding the group's origin, its uniqueness, its connection to a certain territorial location, its language, and more, and also by elements of common tangible and intangible culture and a measure of solidarity. These identity features are primarily social, cultural, and symbolic components, which can be identified over long periods of time, in the annals of the nation, as shapers of national consciousness and deeds. This is not to say they were transmitted from generation to generation without any change. On the contrary, occasionally they were forgotten and then reemerged to become functionaries in the shaping of identity. Frequently the significance and meaning that were attributed to them by the members of the nation changed, sometimes even dramatically. However, they can be characterized as identity definers, with their roots in the ethnic past, as members of the nation use them in the present to describe their identity.

Recently, the importance of national identity has eroded somewhat because of transnational fusions and globalization processes (Ben-Rafael, 2001; Ben-Rafael & Sternberg, 2001; Brettell, 2000; Featherstone, 1990; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Grillo, 1998). Nevertheless, nationality continues to be a tremendously powerful component of identity, if only because it is still the only basis on which a collective can demand sovereignty. In various parts of the globe, it continues to be the driving force for powerful processes in spheres of individual and collective life.

Because the nation serves only as an example for the present model of collective identity, we do not go into the various approaches and conceptions that define, describe, and analyze the nature of nationality. Our major challenge is to present and describe in details the sociopsychological conception of collective identity.

### **A SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: RATIONALE AND OUTLINE**

The uniqueness of the present conception is its assertion that collective identity is a social phenomenon founded on two pillars: features that provide general characteristics to collective identity and created contents that lend to collective identities their particular meanings.

#### *Rationale*

The present conception comes to illuminate heretofore vague aspects of the study of identity in its collective nature. First, there is a need to conceptually clarify the relationship between the collective as a social entity and collective identity under the same theoretical umbrella. The attempts to present this relationship with terms such as *social cohesion*, *solidarity*, and *commitment* do not capture its deep meaning (Ashmore et al., 2004; Jackson & Smith, 1999). Thus, there is a need to elaborate what is meant when one is describing collective identity on a macro-societal level.

Second, sociopsychological theory and research in social psychology, which has made important contributions to the study of identity, have tended to concentrate on the micro level of human behavior and thus have provided a relatively small contribution to the understanding of collective identity in groups and societies (Bar-Tal, 2004; Deaux, 2000; Hogg, 1992; Huddy, 2001). It is impossible, of course, to analyze the identification of an individual with a small group, or even the collective identity of small groups, in the same manner that the collective identities of macro societies, such as

nations, are analyzed. Thus, there is a need for an integrated micro and macro perspective.

Third, because much of the study of identity is carried out from a particular disciplinary perspective, the accumulated knowledge is fragmented. There is a need to address the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon of identity using an interdisciplinary approach. Only integration of different bodies of knowledge that provide different focuses and viewpoints can advance understanding of collective identity and its relations to social identity in a complex, holistic, and meaningful way (R. Brown, 2000a; Hammack, 2008; Hechter, 1987b).

At least four lines of study in the field of social psychology have tried to address these challenges. Herman (1977) presented a sociopsychological model of Jewish identity that offered a systematic analysis of national identity at the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels. He also distinguished between the dimension of *affiliation with the national group* and the dimension of *identity content*. The first dimension refers to the individual's sense of membership in the collective: perception of similarity with other members, mutual responsibility, alignment across time, and space and distinctiveness. The second one is defined as the individual's perception of the attributes of the Jewish group, his or her feelings about them, and the extent to which its norms are adopted by him or her. As can be understood, Herman's analysis focuses on the individual level of identity and defines the content dimension in sociopsychological terms only (e.g., by assessing commitment to the group in practice), without addressing the content itself as it surfaced from the history and culture of the nation.

Bloom (1990) proposed that national identity is based on the identification of individuals with the (national) group of which they are members and that this identity bears meaning only as a consequence of the fact that a large number of people identify with the content that the group offers. However, Bloom did not systematically elaborate the sociopsychological meanings of this common identification and barely related it to the content of national identity.

Ashmore et al. (2004) contributed significantly to the development of our understanding of the concept of collective identity. They introduced an integrative framework for collective identity; specifically, they outlined its multidimensional sociopsychological aspects, detailed equivalent labels and definitions given to each aspect by various scholars, and pointed to the interplay and covariations between these elements but also to the clear delineation lines among them. However, their model views collective identity "as a person variable," and thus it describes "individual-level elements, facets, or dimensions of collective identification" (p. 81). Despite



the fact that they link this concept to broader social spheres by referring to the content of collective identity as one of the facets and by considering the impact of context on each of the facets, their analysis is embedded in the individual sphere. As a result, they did not elaborate on the meaning of the collective identity for the collectives as such. We try to complement this approach with the description of the collective's features of the collective identity.

Recently, Hammack (2008) made a significant effort to integrate cognitive, social, and cultural aspects of identity in terms of content, structure, and process. He viewed identity as an ideology developed through individual encounters with the cultural environment, or in other words as a construct that links the individual to an ongoing social process. According to him, individuals construct personal narratives of identity that anchor the cognitive and social context through which they develop. This view holds that construction of personal narratives of identity is a universal process of individual human development. It is based on cultural and historical context, and eventually it allows understanding of the larger processes of social reproduction by identifying the meaning with which individuals internalize collective narratives. This conception thus well describes the societal-cultural sources of individual identity. But as with the previous contribution, the precise meaning and implications of the collective identity for the collectives at large were beyond the scope of this contribution.

### *Outline of the Conceptual Framework*

The model presented below aims to respond to the above-noted problems. It is informed by theories, definitions, and research in psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and history, and it covers two levels: micro sociopsychological and macro sociopsychological (Bar-Tal, 2006). The first, the micro-sociopsychological level, describes the nature of self-categorization and identification that are individual processes. This level focuses on individuals' organization of their belonging in the social world, by specifying to which group a person thinks that he or she belongs, what he or she thinks about it, and what he or she feels about it.

These processes are the precondition for the emergence of collective identity *that denotes shared awareness and recognition that members of a collective share the same social identity*. On this basis appears the second, the macro-sociopsychological level, that characterizes collectives. This awareness, which leads to collective cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences, provides the basis for sharing a system of beliefs that illuminates the common worldview and then allows continuous communication and negotiation about this

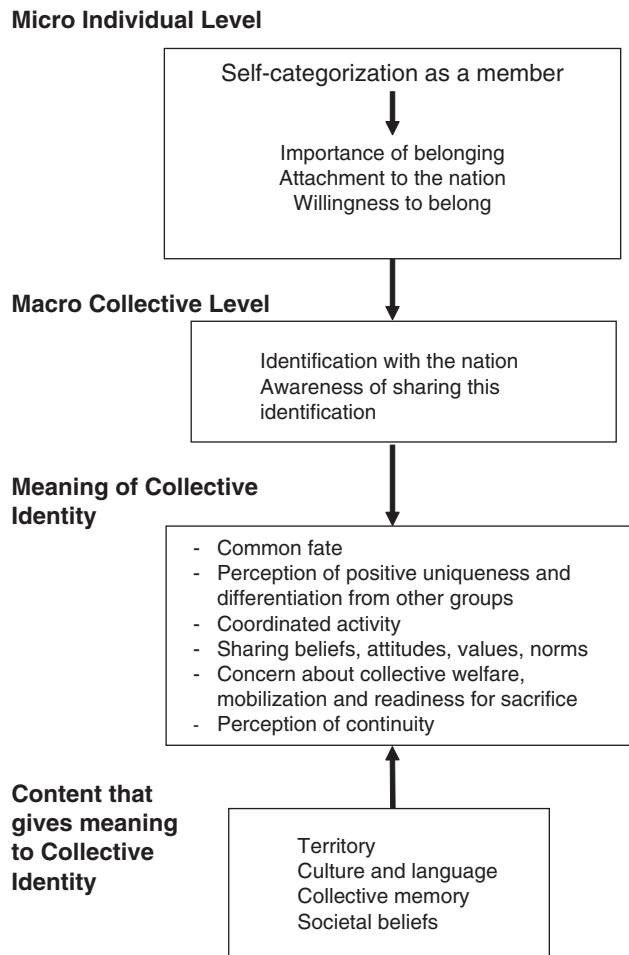
common world. The collective identity goes beyond the individual group member's cognitive-emotional processes to the characterization of the entire collective, as is described.

The macro level of collective identity is founded on two pillars: One pillar consists of generic features that characterize the collective identity. These features are universal, apply to all macro-level collectives, and allow a comparison among them. They are not dependent on specific content of the identity. The other pillar is group specific, and it consists of content characteristics that provide the unique features to the collective identity. That is, this pillar provides the specific contents that endow the very particular meaning to the collective identity (see Figure 1). We define each of the levels with great generality, assuming that there are differences among members of the collective (in our case, a nation) with regard to the first level and among collectives with regard to the macro level with its two foundations. Each level can be assessed and thus can be employed to characterize the collective.

### **THE MICRO-SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL LEVEL: IDENTIFICATION**

Collective identity is sculpted by means of individuals' identification with the macro-level collective. This means that we need to differentiate "identification" at the individual level from "collective identity" (Herman, 1977). Identification is essential for the existence of collective identity. We define identification as *the ability of individuals to identify by name the collective (in our case, a nation) in which they consider themselves to be members and to express some measure of emotional attachment indicating the extent of their desire to belong to this collective and the degree of importance attributed to it*.

The importance of individuals' identification with the surrounding society for the molding of the self, and for the existence of a human society, is evident in classic psychological and sociological theories: Freud (1921/1957), Mead (1934), and Erikson (1959, 1968) are some of the seminal theoreticians who argued that the individual's identity is carved out, among other things, on the basis of his or her capacity to identify with the values, norms, and roles that are prevalent in society. Despite significant differences, these theories share the assumption that individual identity is not an outcome of intrapsychic processes only but rather a consequence of an interaction between the individual and the surrounding society. Freud's "super-ego," which is developed by identification with values and norms of the society through parents, Erikson's stages of social development (mainly Stage 5, identity), and Mead's "generalized



**Figure 1** Model of national identity.

other," which specifies the common values and norms internalized in the self, all refer to the notion that the individual shapes his or her identity, among other things, by identifying with the values, societal beliefs, norms, and symbols of his or her society.

The above definition of individuals' identification with the nation carries two major implications. The first is that identification is a psychological attribute that can be described as a continuum on which individuals may vary (Dekker, Malova, & Hoogendoorn, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). In fact, Brewer (1991) suggested that it reflects a fundamental tension between human needs for validation and similarity to others versus human needs for uniqueness and individuation. Identity studies show not only that individuals differ from each other in the extent to which they identify with their affiliated collectives (Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1999; Herman, 1977; Jackson & Smith, 1999; Phinney, 1990) but also that the measure of individuals' identification with the

collective may fluctuate over time because of personal or collective experiences (DelCampo, Blancero, & Boudwin, 2008; Salazar & Salazar, 1998; Syed, Azmitia, & Phinney, 2007).

These differences among individuals and fluctuations across time within the individual emphasize the subjective and changeable character of the identification. This character, which is universal, has a special significance regarding minority groups, such as immigrants, and their members' identification with the nation: Different individuals within these groups may identify with the new nation to a different extent (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Verkuyten, 2005). They also may differ in the pattern of social identity complexity they adopt, that is, the nature of the subjective representation of multiple in-group identities (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). One of the options is to create a hyphenated identity, in which identification with the original ethnic identity is combined with identification with the new nation (Deaux, 2008), but studies have shown that other options, such as subordination of one of the identities to the other, are also manifested (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Amiot, de la Sablonniere, Terry, and Smith (2007) recently suggested a four-step model that explains the specific process that individuals go through in integrating within the self new identities as a result of changes that they go through in their life, such as, for example, immigration.

Our definition of the term *identification* also implies that it does not merely signify membership in the collective (Brewer, 2001b) but also comprises psychological processes on three different levels. This means that identification is multidimensional. Although this multidimensionality has been recognized, there is little agreement about the nature of the different dimensions (see Ashmore et al., 2004; Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, Halevy, & Eidelson, 2008). Our view is that the best way to conceptualize this multidimensionality is in terms of its cognitive, emotional, and motivational aspects.

### *Cognitive Aspects of Identification*

The cognitive aspect of identification includes two components: self-categorization and the importance that individuals attribute to their identification with the collective. The actual act of categorization—that is, recognizing the collective of which the individual is a member, and, in our case, a nation—is the elementary necessary condition for the formation of an individual's identification with the particular nation. According to self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), people have an automatic tendency to categorize individuals, including themselves, according to similar features. This attribution is situationally dependent, as the given social

context determines the saliency of the criteria by which they carry out social categorization. The categorization results in a degree of depersonalization such that the self is perceived in terms of the identity of the group to which the individual belongs and not in terms of personal identity (Hogg & McGarty, 1990; Turner, 1999).

Research on nationalism has concentrated on the use of labels for the definition of individuals' affinity to the collective as well as on the definition of the ethno-national identity of the society and the state. In fact, it has been suggested that self-categorization to a nation constitutes the first recognition of a macro-social group by the child (Barrett, 2007; Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Nesdale & Flesser, 2001; Quintana & McKown, 2008; Tajfel, Jahoda, Nemeth, Campbell, & Johnson, 1970; Teichman & Bar-Tal, 2008). Other studies have revealed how complex and/or unstable the categorization can be, for instance, when there is no congruence between national and civic identity (Greenfield & Yack, 1999) or as a consequence of political mobilization and developments in the sociopolitical reality (Horowitz, 1985). Examples of the latter phenomena can be seen among ethno-national minorities within nation-states that struggle to define their identity, such as Basques and Catalans in Spain or French speakers in Quebec (e.g., Maclure, 2003); in nations that are united within federative states or hope to disassemble the federative structure, such as those in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union (Sekulic, Massey, & Hodson, 1994); and in states that wish to preserve their ethno-national identity in the face of challenges set by minorities, as in Macedonia, Germany, and Holland (Davis, 1997; Mendelsohn, 2002; Phinney, 1990; Yakobson & Rubinstein, 2008).

The second cognitive aspect of national identification is the extent of the importance that individuals attribute to their membership in the nation. Ashmore et al. (2004) showed that theories of identity attend to two concepts concerning *importance*. The first is called *explicit*, or "psychological centrality" (Stryker & Serpe, 1994), which refers to the individuals' conscious appraisal of the importance (centrality) of their membership in the collective (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This addresses the salience of this membership and its relevance to the individuals' decisions (Bar-Tal, Raviv, & Freund, 1994). The second is the *implicit importance* that Stryker (1980; Stryker & Serpe, 1994) named *prominence*. According to Stryker's theory, individuals' identities are hierarchically organized in accordance with their *degree of prominence*, which is defined as the probability that the individuals will act in line with the expectations embedded in a specific identity role. The appraisal of importance in both these senses appears in studies that have examined the extent of individuals' identification with

their ethnic and national group (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous, 1998).

### *Emotional Aspects of Identification*

The second component on which individuals' identification with the collective is scrutinized concerns the extent of their emotional attachment to the collective. This is expressed through feelings of love, devotion, care, or concern (Bar-Tal, 1993). When individuals feel they are part of the collective, they also often develop an affective attachment to it. In the case of national identity, this is usually called "patriotism" or "nationalism" (see Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997).

Deaux (1996) noted that most studies emanating from self-categorization theory tend to disregard this component (also see Ashmore et al., 2004). Yet Tajfel's original work on social identity referred to the emotional component of this type of identification, claiming that the social categories that arise through cognitive process of categorization are not neutral but rather harbor an emotional meaning (Brewer, 2001a; Tajfel, 1982). The emotional component of identification is also common in questionnaires that tap individuals' identification with the ethnic or national collective with which they are affiliated (Davis, 1997; Mendelsohn, 2002; Phinney, 1990, 1992).

It should be noted though that emotional attachment is not necessarily related to pride. Members of a collective may feel attachment as expressed in care and love but may not feel great pride because of various reasons such as lack of achievements, past acts, or dominated policy. Rose (1985) reported a wide scope survey about national pride that found that in the United States 96% of the citizens hold a sense of pride in the country, Ireland 91%, Mexico 88%, United Kingdom 86%, Spain 83%, and Federal Republic of Germany 59%. He concluded his study by saying that "patriotism is the norm in every country surveyed: the differences in national pride are a matter of degree, not of kind" (p. 86).

### *Motivational Aspects of Identification*

The third component of identification is motivational and refers to individuals' will to belong to a collective. This desire may be a product of basic human needs, which are then satisfied through collective membership. Researchers have pointed to several possible, relevant needs. First, belonging to a human collective reflects a universal and primary need of humans. This need represents a person's aspiration to create interpersonal relationships that are accompanied by positive emotions and that have some continuity over time (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Mack, 1983). Second, the individual may



want to belong to a collective to achieve a positive self-value. Social identity theory claims that individuals draw their positive esteem from membership in groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Mack (1983) added achievement of security as a third motive for motivational identification with a nation. Membership in a nation provides the person with the feeling that he or she is protected by the state. However, it is well known that identification with the nation may actually negatively affect individuals' security when they are required to risk their lives on the nation's behalf or become victims of violent attacks because of their national membership. In spite of these dangers, we should add that individuals may wish to be a part of the nation for the sake of instrumental benefits, without experiencing any emotional attachment.

In view of the above analysis, we suggest that any conception of national identity must address both facets of nationalism—its affective component and the political, economic, and social practices that provide meaning to national communities. Thus, identification with a nation links the individual to a unique culture and language and to a positive reference group that is connected to the past and future (see Hammack, 2008). In this way it renders to individuals' beliefs and deeds significant historical perspective and gives them a sense that their community has existed before them and will continue to exist after them (Smith, 1986). In addition, at the same time, affinity to the nation lends a meaning to the social and political order into which individuals are born or live because institutions, laws, norms, and roles derive from the social and political definitions of nation-states.<sup>3</sup>

The above conception of the cognitive, emotional, and motivational aspects of identification at the micro-sociopsychological level implies that different types of identification at different levels lead to different kinds of social mobilization and action. Thus, for example, the greater importance individuals attribute to their membership in the nation, both the larger their investment of emotional resources in this membership and the greater their will to belong to the collective, strengthening their readiness for mobilization. It is important to note that this description does not assert a causal relationship but only a correlational one. Moreover, it is likely that there are cases in which only two of the three aspects are manifested. For example, when a person wishes to belong to the national collective to please others in the social environment or because of particular circumstances that force him or her to belong, we could say that this belonging may not be personally important. In these cases, identification with the nation rests on motivational and cognitive bases but not an emotional one. Empirical data have shown that these elements are

not necessarily correlated (see, e.g., Ashmore et al., 2004; Gurin, Hurtado, & Peng, 1994; Jackson & Smith, 1999; Phinney, 1990).

### THE MACRO-SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL LEVEL: COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

The transition to the macro-sociopsychological level is achieved by defining shared collective identity as *a situation in which individuals in a society identify with the collective and are aware that other members identify with this collective as well*. That is, only when a large portion of a large-scale collective defines itself as members of the collective, identifies with the collective, feels that this membership is important, and is conscious of other members holding similar beliefs and feelings and acting in a similar fashion does the collective exist as a psychological entity; that is, only then does a collective identity exist in the sociopsychological sense of the term. This identity is called a *collective identity*, and we now elaborate on this concept, focusing as an example on national collective identity (Bloom, 1990).

The shared national *collective identity* is a powerful force with emotional, perceptual, and behavioral outcomes at the collective level. When society members not only share it but also are aware of this, they form particular beliefs, attitudes, and patterns of behaviors that characterize them as a collective (Bar-Tal, 2000). This position is well expressed in the sociology of knowledge perspective, which proposes that social knowledge is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social situations and that as such it shapes the reality of the society members (Mannheim, 1952). In the view of Parsons (1951), "The sharing of a common beliefs system is a condition of the full integration of a system of social interactions" (p. 352). The stability of a macro-social system depends on the degree to which society members internalize the shared beliefs and produce an integrative collective belief system.

We propose that the macro-sociopsychological level of collective identity is constructed of two major foundations. One foundation consists of the generic features that are found in every collective and characterize it on the general level, whereas the other foundation includes specific contents that provide the collective with features that endow it with unique and particular characteristics. Each of the foundations of collective identity is described in detail.

#### *Generic Features of Collective Identity*

We suggest that the collective identity includes the following six fundamental generic features.

*A sense of a common fate.* This element pertains to the sense of unity and the feelings of mutual dependence that prevail among members of a collective and in our case of a nation. First of all, it reflects the belief that the nation's members belong to the same collective despite their various differences; that is, the perception that what they share as collective members surpasses what separates them. This is the feeling of "togetherness," the "cement" that connects individuals and social groups in national unity (R. Brown, 2000a) and enables them to define themselves as belonging to the same collective despite variability in values, beliefs, attitudes, and patterns of behavior. But the significance of shared fate in our view is more extensive and includes beliefs that the nation's members experience feelings of attachment to each other and to the nation as such and perceptions and feelings of mutual dependence among the collective members. This latter view is of special importance as it implies that the fate of each one of the collective's individuals is perceived as dependent on the fate of the whole. Ashmore et al. (2004) suggested that the perception of a shared fate constitutes a central component of collective identity both in theoretical and operational definitions of the term. They observed that group members develop the feeling of a common fate when they sense that they are being treated as group members and not as individuals, meaning that they notice that their treatment and the outcomes of their behavior are independent of their private identity.

Sociopsychological research regards the sense of a shared fate as one of the characteristics of social identity in general and of national identity in particular. Gurin and Townsend (1986), who defined *common fate* as the individual's dependence on the fate of the collective, claimed that a sense of a common fate is particularly prominent among minority groups and among collectives that are persecuted because their sense of threat is personal and collective at the same time. Doosje et al. (1999) and Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (2002) have drawn connections between common fate and members' commitment, that is, the extent to which group members feel that they have strong emotional ties with the collective. They found that a high level of commitment is related to behavioral mobilization for the sake of the group, to stereotypical distinctions between the in-group and out-group, and to an emphasis on group cohesion. Herman (1977), in his research on Jewish identity, noted the perception of "interrelatedness" as one of the basic components of national identity. This perception is based on an assumption that whatever happens to Jews is important to all other Jews wherever they are.

Common fate appears to be one of the cornerstones of national identity in research on nationalism. First, the

myth of common origins, which is a corollary to common fate, is one of the foundations of national identity (Smith, 1999). Members of a nation are perceived as the foliage of a single tree, an extended family that has grown from one seed. Phrases referring to family relations, such as "our fathers" or "our sisters," which affirm a belief in the unity of the collective, are common within the national discourse (Johnson, 1997).<sup>4</sup> Second, the political discourse in nation-states tends to emphasize the unity of the nation over and against inner divisions, especially during times of crisis or when national identity is otherwise under attack (Bar-Tal, 2007; Billig, 1995; Darby, 1991). Third, states that wish to preserve their affinity to national diasporas (e.g., Germany, Greece, Hungary, and Ireland) legislate laws that reflect the perception indicating that the national community dwelling within the state and in the diaspora constitute one national community (Yakobson & Rubinstein, 2008).

*The perception of the uniqueness of the collective and its distinction from other collectives.* This factor relates to the definition of the collective's selfhood as a unique entity that is different from other collectives. The national collective identity consists of two complementary facets. On one side, the positive definition of the national collective as an entity focuses on the particular substance of identity shared by the nation's members (Bar-Tal, 2000). This content may include cultural beliefs, values, norms, symbols, territory, language, and more, which are discussed later. As a response to the question "Who are we?" the nation's members will articulate a distinctive "we" with the unique characteristics. On the other side is the delineation of the outer boundary of the collective, the assertion of an "inside" (we) and an "outside" (others) and the formulation of the relationship between "we" and "others" in the social reality of the national collective. This is an essential mechanism for the consolidation of one's own identity because without it the collective members' perception of themselves as a unique unit is meaningless. Nevertheless, nations differ in their emphasis on the extent and quality of the differentiation from other nations.

With regard to the two described facets of collective identity, we follow Eriksen (1995) and Ben-Rafael (2002), who suggested that people may constitute their identity by looking for some kind of unique commonality (identity as subject), be it of a political, ideological, economic, religious, or symbolic nature and/or by comparing their identity to other identities (identity as an object). The first facet is the "positive" way of defining national identity ("we-hood"), whereas the second one is the "negative" way of defining it ("us-hood" vs. "them"). Both are the outcome of the people's perception of their national identity. However, most researchers in

the social sciences regard identity as constructed through constant contact with others (Barth, 1969; Coser, 1956; Tajfel, 1981).

The differentiation between in- and out-groups emanates first and foremost from the need to create order in the social world: By mapping their place in the social reality, human beings impart meaning to it (Tajfel, 1982). Categorization allows for the maximization of resemblance between members of the in-group and for difference between the in- and out-groups (Turner, 1999). These processes enable the person to recognize people that are similar and those that are different and to position himself or herself in the social space. Following optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991), we suggest that at the sociopsychological macro level the collective is formed when two needs—inclusion and differentiation—attain satisfaction at the same time. The need for inclusion leads to the willingness and readiness of human beings to belong to groups. The second need acts in the opposite direction and is expressed through active attempts to delineate clear boundaries marking who belongs to the group and who does not. As group membership becomes more inclusive, the need for differentiation is activated. We see this process in various European countries today in which opened policies to accept members of other ethnic groups have receded to attempts to differentiate between original members and newcomers and even to prevent their entry (Papademetriou, 2006; Schieruo, Hansen, & Castles, 2006). Hence, the need for inclusion is achieved in the framework of the in-group, whereas the need for differentiation is obtained by contrasting between the in-group and out-groups.

Research in the field of nationalism and ethnicity reveals that the perception of uniqueness and distinction plays a crucial role in the formation of national collective identity and its changes at the macro-social level. First, the perception of uniqueness can be experienced through the culture, language, customs, and beliefs that “turn the nation into what it is”; that is, they express the collective self (Ben-Rafael, 2002). Awareness of the nation’s authenticity and its unique designation may be manifested through the myth of the nation and divine electedness of its territory. This type of belief was prevalent among dispersed nations, which maintained their ethnic coherence for centuries in the absence of territorial sovereignty (e.g., Jews, Armenians, and Greeks; Cauthen, 2004; Hastings, 1997; Smith, 2003).<sup>5</sup>

Second, it should be noted that the sense of uniqueness is not a stable feature but rather is dynamically constructed and reconstructed in the context of relationships with other identities that exist in the national space (see Gellner, 1983; Kedourie, 1992). Thus, Austrian identity, since the end of World War II, has been developing in

terms of its distinction from German identity (Thaler, 1997), and within the framework of British identity, Scottish and Welsh identities are molded in contradiction to the dominant English identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Western countries have recently been coping with the dilemmas of forging national identities in the presence of immigrant communities in their national space, and this has led to the adoption of a variety of policy lines toward these groups (Castles, 1995). Moreover, ethnic, racial, and national communities that are in a state of conflict, such as Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, Jews and Palestinians in the Middle East, Serbs and Croats in the former Yugoslavia, and Whites and Blacks in South Africa, tend to define their identities as opposite to their adversaries’ identity, to the point of the delegitimization of the latter (Bar-Tal, 1990; Oren & Bar-Tal, 2007).

Regarding the relationship between identification and conflict, we believe that the definition of the relationship between the collective self and the other is not necessarily antagonistic. Conflict is one of a wide spectrum of expressions of differentiation between collective self and others (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). As a rule, relationships between collectives may be manifested in three different ways: (a) self-deprecation in relation to other identities (i.e., refraining from criticism of the other identity and even aggrandizing it or obscuring collective boundaries to the point of assimilation into another nation), (b) fear and degradation of other identities (i.e., perceiving others as foreign and as a threat to existence), and (c) a dialogue between identities (i.e., recognition of differences alongside intercommunity contacts that aim for coexistence and mutual nourishment; Sagi, 2000).

*Coordinated activity of the collective’s members.* This factor pertains to the ability of the different groups and sectors that compose the nation to collaborate with each other to achieve national goals. The coordinated collective activity stands on two bases: One is the ability to set superordinate goals that are shared by the nation’s members (i.e., goals that are perceived as promoting national interests and not the particular interests of one group), and the second is the ability to act in ways that allow for the achievement of these goals. Coordinated activity is mainly a behavioral outcome of common national identification. It constitutes the practical and empirically observable expression of the ability of social groups within a nation to cooperate on shared goals.

The perception of coordinated activity as an expression of collective identity is rooted in modern sociological thinking. It has been influenced by a metaphor from biology research showing how different body parts work in coordination (Procacci, 2001). Durkheim (1964)

reflected this approach in the investigation of human society when he coined the concept *organic solidarity*, which refers to the mutual functional dependence of individuals that characterizes the modern era. Researchers in the field of social psychology tend to define this coordinated activity as a type of mutual dependence. R. Brown (2000a) pointed out that one type of mutual dependence requires coordinated activity and necessitates a concrete connection among collective members to obtain shared goals (also see Deaux, 1996; Henry, Arrow, & Carini, 1999). Some researchers define *group cohesiveness* as a product of group members' willingness to work together to obtain their collective goals (Forsyth, 1999; Hogg, 1992). Hechter (1987a) applied this approach to the study of nationalism. He claimed that political parties or national movements come into being only when people infer that they will allow them to acquire goods that are not accessible to them as individuals. Here, national solidarity depends on the ability of the national movement to define shared goals and to delineate a route toward their realization, despite controversies.

*Commonality of beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values.* Nation members share beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values that characterize them. This commonality, of which nation members are aware (Bar-Tal, 2000; Smith, 1991), is a consequence of a process of depersonalization: Their self-definition as collective members, rather than as unique individuals, leads them to hold beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values that characterize the collective prototype (Turner et al., 1987). The commonality may be expressed, for example, through religious beliefs and ceremonies (if the nation members belong to the same religion), through social values and norms that are seen as representative of the nation's spirit, through the adoption of common symbols and a national ideology, and so on (D'Andrade, 1984; Geertz, 1973; Parsons, 1951).

Bar-Tal's (2000) review of research on shared societal beliefs reveals that this concept is rooted in the foundations of social psychology and sociology as well as in contemporary research.<sup>6</sup> Durkheim (1964), who coined the term *collective representations*, referred to society members' shared beliefs originating in traditions conveyed from one generation to the next, which are static beliefs by nature. According to him, premodern societies were built on mechanical solidarity founded on a system of common values, internalized norms, and shared beliefs. In his later writings, Durkheim changed his approach and argued that mechanical solidarity occurs in modern societies as well (Hechter, 2001). This perception was a basis for the *normative school's* definition of social solidarity (Hechter, 1987b) as the commitment of members to the values and norms of the collective.

In contrast, Moscovici (1984, 1988) developed the term *social representations*, a concept that refers to the shared knowledge of society members, a concept that is more sensitive to changes over time. He attributed greater significance than Durkheim to the dynamism and the ongoing shaping of social concepts and images and less to their passing on from one generation to the other.

We wish to argue that in the investigation of nationalism it is important to pay attention to both aspects of shared beliefs. National identity is based on stable elements and on dynamic components. That is, the beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values that nation members espouse derive from past traditions into which these were formed and from formative events and social and cultural processes that take place in the course of time. For example, the national glue of the United States as an immigrant society was realized in the acceptance of fundamental values and beliefs such as free enterprise, the supremacy of the constitution, and commitment to individual rights (McClosky & Zaler, 1984); the right to territorial sovereignty is an elementary belief of all national movements (Herb, 1990); and patriotic beliefs and attitudes that express love for the country and its people are manifested in various cultural, political, and educational products such as literature, films, political speeches, art, school textbooks, and so on (Johnson, 1997). They are widely disseminated and adopted by members of the nation (Aberbach, 2003; Bar-Tal, 2000; Billig, 1995). Of special importance are shared beliefs about common experiences in the past that strengthen national bonds and provide a foundation for a common national identity (Ben-Amos, 1997). Thus, for example, the remembered experience of the Holocaust serves as one of the foundations for Jewish identity in Israel (Ofer, 2004); Bar-Tal (2007, in preparation) suggested that during long and violent conflicts societies develop shared sociopsychological infrastructure that includes collective memory of the conflict, ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientation; and Billig (1995) demonstrated how simple routines of daily life reinforce common beliefs of national identity. Similarly, Yakobson and Rubinstein (2008) showed that nationally observed, weekly rest days typically reflect a historical connection between the ethno-national majority and its religion. Finally, the adoption of a national language as the vernacular for the nation's members is a norm that national movements and nation-states encourage (Ayturk, 2004; Safran, 1999b).<sup>7</sup>

*Concern for the welfare of the collective and mobilization and sacrifice for its sake.* The sense of belonging causes members of the national collective to feel an interest in the experiences of the collective and its members and to feel concern for their welfare and motivates



them to act on their behalf. The latter is manifested through willingness to join in missions of a national nature, to contribute personal resources for the benefit of all, to help nation members in times of distress, and even to sacrifice one's life for the protection of the nation (Kashti, 1997). Similar to the factor of coordinated activity, mobilization is a behavioral element. The difference between the two is qualitative and not quantitative: Collective mobilization concentrates on the willingness of the nation members to devote resources for the sake of the nation and to be guided by national interest over and beyond their personal interests. Concerns for the well-being, prosperity, and security of nation members as individuals and for the nation as a society lead to collective mobilization, in which nation members take risks and invest their own resources on behalf of the collective (Reykowski, 1997). In contrast, coordinated activity refers to the execution of shared goals. Both aspects are inherently related to collective identity because collective awareness is a necessary precondition for thoughts and behaviors regarding collective welfare.

Research on nationalism especially focuses on nation members' willingness to make sacrifices in times of violent conflict or war (Ben-Amos & Bar-Tal, 2004, provided a wide scope analysis of the evolvement of the Israeli patriotism in view of the Israeli-Arab conflict that has required meaningful sacrifice from the Jewish society members). These contexts require strong patriotism for the sake of the preservation of the homeland and national existence (Mosse, 1990). In many cases, a context of violent conflict leads to the ultimate sacrifice of life (see, e.g., the sacrifices of Russian people in defending Moscow in 1941; Braithwaite, 2006). No doubt this aspect of mobilization is a central one, but national collective mobilization, in fact, carries a much broader meaning and includes any behavior in which the nation's members contribute to national goals. All of these types of behavior are rooted in the motivation to protect the collective's security, resources, and values and to contribute to the well-being of the nation.

*Continuity and consecutiveness in the dimension of time.* The definition of collective identity requires the formulation of a collective attitude toward the three components of the dimension of time: past, present, and future. It touches on one of the fundamental questions regarding identity, both personal and collective: Is identity founded on a consecutive, stable, and unchanging consciousness, or do identity components change among past, present, and future, creating a social reality where new identities replace, at least in part, the old? This complex debate is beyond the scope of the present article, but we nonetheless concentrate on formulations

of the dimension of time in the shaping of national identity.<sup>8</sup>

We suggest that the national identity includes shared perception by a nation's members of some continuity over time. Taking an existentialist approach, Sagi (2006) proposed that both individuals and the society shape their present identity through a dialogue with the past and the future. The past, in this perspective, is the cultural ensemble created by previous generations. It provides the society with the basic anchor for its existence; human beings are not born in a vacuum but as part of a particular tradition and culture. Language, collective memory, values, and norms all draw on the past, thus offering society an initial orientation in time. The future, on the other hand, constitutes the horizon of aspirations and possibilities that face a society. It is the horizon that gives human society the opportunity to select the goals toward which it aspires and to change (at least) some of its identity components and their meaning.

In the middle, between the past and the future, is the present. Although the present is based on the culture of the past and serves as a basis for future expectations, it is grounded in a particular context. This context provides the challenges that nations have to cope with, dictates the agenda, and sets the mental preoccupations of the nation's members.

It is important to note that the connections among past, present, and future are not fully continuous. That is, identity features are not simply passed on as a whole to the younger generation; identity is not a static entity or essence. Rather, the perception of the continuity is a product of dynamic processes in which society reorganizes the identity components. Some of them are integrated to the identity as they are; many others are reshaped by means of lending new meanings to them according to changes in the social, cultural, political, and technological conditions; and still others are new contents of identity based on the particular context of the present, as noted above.

This conception is based on a two-sided insight: On one hand, the unreserved embrace of the past means overlooking present social, political, and cultural conditions and thus hurting the achievement of new national goals that appear as a result of the evolvement of new challenges. Similarly, the rejection of the past and severance of continuity hinder society's ability to lend meaning to its contemporary existence and to establish itself in the broad cultural context in which it has grown. Even when a society tries to disconnect itself from the past, it never does so unequivocally but always implicitly and explicitly continues past traditions, as was shown by Gozman (1997) in the analysis of the Soviet case following the Bolshevik revolution. We suggest that

a nation that forgets its past has difficulty constructing its identity in present, but at the same time a nation that relies mainly on its past cannot construct meaningful directions for a dynamic future.

Our argument is, therefore, that the molding of national identity is a dynamic process involving an interaction among three time dimensions, without complete rejection or adoption of any one of them. This means that members of the nation hold their identity in the present while lending renewed meanings, at times revolutionary ones, to the structures related to the content of identity—symbols, rituals, texts, traditions, beliefs, values, and the primary ethos—which have been shaped in the past. Examples of these practices are leaning on the ethnic past as a moral basis in constitutions of the democratic nation-states, which declare the continuous connection between the dominant ethnic-nation and the specific territory and give the nation-state the right to promote institutional, cultural, and economic connections with the respective diasporas; integration of ethnic and religious symbols in the formal state's symbols; revival of symbols and myths in present literature and music and revival of rituals by lending modern meanings to their content; giving prioritized status to specific eras in the national collective memory that anchor present generation to their past; and so on (Aberbach, 2003; Hutchinson, 1987; Hutchinson & Aberbach, 1999; Leoussi & Grosby, 2007; Smith, 2000; Yakobson & Rubinstein, 2008). A characteristic example is Zionism, which initiated a revolutionary process: It prioritized the national component of the Jewish identity over the religious one; considered the Bible as the primary source of national and moral values while pushing aside at least some of the post-Biblical Jewish codices, such as the Halacha—the Jewish religious law (which for many centuries was considered as the most important codex); created a modern national linkage to the historic homeland of Israel, which its memory was preserved for centuries in exile; revived the Hebrew language; and shaped a dialectic mixture of ancient and traditional holidays combined with renewed meanings (S. Almog, Reinhartz, & Shapira, 1998; Schweid, 1985, 2000; Shapira, 2005; Shimoni, 1995).

Interestingly, even though the perception of temporal continuity is critical for the shaping of identity, research in social psychology has almost entirely ignored this factor (Spears, 2008). Herman (1977) as well as Reicher and Hopkins (2001), as social psychologists, and the sociologists Horowitz and Lissak (1989) are among the few who did refer to this issue.<sup>9</sup> Recently, Sani and his colleagues (2007) developed an instrument that measures collective continuity. They suggested that the perceived collective's continuity has two dimensions: The first one is perceived cultural continuity that refers to

values, beliefs traditions, habits, and so on, and the other one refers to the historical continuity of periods, events, and so on. The study performed in two states confirmed the existence of the two dimensions and showed that they are positively related to the identification with the collective and collective self-esteem. A very significant contribution in sociopsychological research on continuity was made in Fabio Sani's (2008) edited book, which includes chapters that (a) describe studies that have defined and measured various dimensions of the perception of continuity over time, (b) elaborate on the important functions that temporal continuity fulfills for individuals and society, (c) note the connection between biographical continuity for individuals and families and collective continuity, and (d) show correlations of contiguous perceptions of time to feelings of identification with the collective and to actions taken on behalf of the collective.

Research on nationalism indicates that societies may lean on varied, and sometimes even clashing, time orientations when legitimizing their arguments and acts. This line of research ranges from an orientation that stresses continuity with an entire national culture that has been shaped in the past, through an orientation that emphasizes a connection to specific periods in the national past while pushing other periods aside, to an orientation that primarily appears in new or revolutionary societies, in which the national future is the central focus. Even in this latter category, past culture continues to seep into national identity, whether as a source from which the society draws inspiration or as a failed model from which a society tries to distance itself. These orientations may operate simultaneously even if one (or more) of them is more dominant than others (Allen, 2008; Billington, 1997; Cetin, 2004; Connerton, 1989; Cusack, 2001; Lipset, 1997; Smith, 1991, 1997; Stites, 1991).

In sum, the six elements that compose the macro-sociopsychological level represent the spectrum of shared beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that derive from shared national collective identification. They all emerge as a result of collective identity and characterize macro groups. Although all six are necessary for the existence of collective identity, some of these elements may be more powerful than others in different societies and in different times, as collectives differ with regard to the intensity, extensity, and quality of these features. Recently, these six characteristics have served as bases for the analysis of Jewish society over the century spanning the prestate period through the establishment of the state of Israel until the present years (David, 2007). This study pointed out that although all characteristics were evident over the hundred-year period, their strength and manifestation changed.

### *Particular Features of Collective Identity: Contents*

The second pillar of the collective identity is content based, and it provides the particular epistemic basis for the collective identity. Ashmore et al. (2004) defined content as "the semantic space in which identity resides—a space that can include self attributed characteristics, political ideology, and developmental narratives" (p. 94). It presents the specific societal-cultural knowledge transmitted via various modes of channels of communication and institutions that gives meaning to the collective identity. The contents of this knowledge enable members of the collective to identify with their unique collective rather than with any other human collective. The particular substance and qualities of national identity, for example, provide the crucial foundations for identification and differentiation (as an example regarding the Jewish identity in Israel, see Gorni, 2003; Liebman & Don-Yehiya, 1983; Shapira, 1992, 2004; Shimoni, 1995; as an example of contents that make British identity, see Samuel, 1989; for contents of Moroccan identity, see Gregg, 2007; and for contents of American identity, see as examples Kammen, 1991; Zelinsky, 1988). They portray the specific meaning of a particular nation and draw from at least three tributaries: (a) tradition (beliefs, memories, cultural products, symbols, and institutions that have formed collective identity in the past; these may be religious, cultural, national, or some of fusion of these), (b) national ideology that articulates the nation's right to self-definition in a certain territory and that defines the nation's members as members of one collective and also provides the goals, and (c) crucial experiences based on important events that have taken place in the society and that have been experienced by its members, either directly (through participation) or indirectly (by observation, hearing, or reading). The latter events, called major events, have a profound resonance; they are very relevant to the welfare of the individuals that compose the society and to the society as a whole (Bar-Tal & Sharvit, 2008).

Content differs from one collective to another (Bar-Tal, 2000), and in the case of nations each nation has its own set of contents that defines its identity (see Andrews, 2007). We now list some important contents of national identity as examples that can be found in many nations.

*Territory.* Attachment to certain territories began the moment human collectives ceased to roam and permanently settled in certain geographic regions (Newman, 1999; Sack, 1986). The importance of the association of the human collective (the people) with a particular territory has peaked in modernity. Because principles of the nationalism favor the concentration of the nation in

a single, sovereign territory, deep connections have formed between territory and national identity (Herb, 1990; Hobsbawm, 1992; Smith, 1991).

This territory is not "simply" a piece of land; it is the motherland of the nation, the geographical site of central historical events and where its unique character has been molded. It is hence the only place where the nation members can fully articulate their unique identity (Hooson, 1994; Storey, 2001). Therefore, nations that fight for control over the same piece of land attempt to find support (e.g., archeological) in historiographical arguments (Goemans, 2006; Smith, 1999). In some cases, the attachment to the particular territory is not forgotten even when the nation is forced into collective exile such as in the Jewish, Armenian, and Greek-Orthodox cases, and in these cases territory serves as a target for longing and future aspirations of return (Smith, 1999). Also, nationalism's attraction to rural districts originates from a romantic symbolism that wishes to restore a putatively harmonious life of the people on their land, an idyllic and morally pure life prior to the arrival of the modern era (Herb, 1990). The more remotely this historical period is situated in the ancient past, the more justified the nation feels in its historical right to the territory (Meisels, 2005).

Generally speaking, modern national movements strive to establish nation-states on historic homeland. But in most cases, the nation-state includes citizens who belong to other nations (or ethnic communities). Therefore, it should be emphasized that the nation-state is the political epitome of an identity that is cultural, historical, and/or religious in its roots. That is why many national movements have cultural streams that focus not on achieving political independence but on moral and cultural revival.

*Culture and language.* Common cultural characteristics (one or more) constitute the second aspect of national identity's content. There are numerous anthropological definitions for the term *culture*. Some of them imply a fairly static and stable conception. For example, Geertz (1973) defined culture as "historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (p. 89). In contrast, Nagel (1994) modernized Barth's (1969) notion of culture as a vessel by suggesting that culture is like a shopping cart, in which people can put any kind of goods (art, music, religion, norms, beliefs, myths, etc.). She claimed that this shopping cart is not a fixed historical legacy, that is, it does not come to us "loaded with a set of historical goods" (p. 162). Gjerde (2004) took this claim another step forward and

stated that culture “is something that is invented, reinvented and sustained by people in personally meaningful ways within the political terrain that frames their lives” (p. 153). He emphasized that it is a political and historical construct, an outcome of power relations in society.

Again, this sharp dichotomy between pure essentialism and radical constructivism seems to us as misleading. As argued before, the sociopsychological model leads us to the notion that human beings are not passive consumers of the culture in which they were born, nor do they “invent” culture out of nothing. The facts that culture is a product of human history and that it does not necessarily develop in a linear fashion do not mean that people can put in or remove from their “shopping chart” anything they want. Transmission, construction, and socialization are important factors in shaping national cultures.

In this light, we argue that the term *culture* should be understood in its broad meaning to include language, canonical texts, customs and ways of life, rituals, ceremonies, traditions, symbols, architectural styles, and the like that were created in the annals of the nation, many times because of contact with other national cultures, were transmitted through generations (sometimes put aside and then reintroduced), and constitute the wide field that expresses the particular contents that endow meanings to members of the society and shape their identity.

Culture specifies the conceptual significance of the term *national identity* in terms of its concrete components—those that can be seen, heard, felt, and even smelled. As such, culture constitutes a type of two-way window through which one can observe the depth of identity: namely, what defines the uniqueness of the collective and, at the same time, how this identity is reflected and concretely expressed (Facos & Hirsh, 2003; Leoussi & Grosby, 2007; Smith, 1991).

Among all the components of culture, language has special importance (Kramsch, 1998). The distinction between collectives on the basis of spoken language is an ancient human practice. Yet in the prenatal period no ideology inspired this practice. The modern national era has intensified the use of linguistic practice for the motivation and mobilization of large populations and has also added to it a clear ideological dimension. As several researchers of nationalism (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983) and sociolinguists (Fishman, 1972) have indicated, urbanization, industrialization, and the spread of capitalism, which all characterized the 18th and 19th centuries, required the distribution of written and spoken languages. Only mass distribution could enhance coordination and communication among sections of the population that had, until then, lived in relative isolation. It is also worth noting that despite the

fact that certain languages are tied at their core to religious sacred writings and that translating the Bible to various written vernaculars is considered to have an immense effect on shaping some national identities (Hastings, 1997), the language also owns a strong, secular, symbolic component in its basic use for daily communication and for the shaping of nonreligious culture. Language embodies written cultural products and collective memories and allows their engraving in the canonical texts (Shur, 2001; Suleiman, 2003).

Nationalism sought to generate emotional identification with a unique language, the language of the nation, among national members (Bloomaert, 2005; Shohamy, 2006). Nationalist ideologues presented their language and its cultural products—sacred and secular corpuses—as encapsulating the nation’s cultural uniqueness and ensuring cultural continuity (Edwards, 1985; Fishman, 1972). Because language is the most methodical and central symbolic system for the preservation and transmission of ideas, wishes, experiences, and emotions (Edwards, 1985; Sapir, 1974), its nation-building potential is obvious. In Fishman’s (1972) words, “The language of the place was not the main route to the history; it was the history itself” (p. 45).

However, today’s national languages should not be seen as identical to ancient languages but rather as inspired by ancient layers. To mediate between various influences on the language and the many needs of modern national life, a system of linguistic planning was created in which both powerful political and social parties and professionals (linguists, lexicographers, and intellectuals) played a part. Together, all of these professionals established institutionalized systems for the dissemination of national languages to bring about a high level of social and political integration (Haugen, 1966; Safran, 1999a; Williams, 1994).

*Collective memory.* The story of the nation’s origin and its evolution is a third core content of national identity. This does not mean “history” in its scholarly, academic sense but rather the social memory that includes events, processes, and persons as remembered by the nation (Halbwachs, 1941/1992; Kansteiner, 2002). Collective memory is defined as knowledge that is passed on to members of a certain society through social communication channels regarding that society’s past and from which they infer the significance of past events (Connerton, 1989; Gillis, 1994; Margalit, 2002; Zerubavel, 1995). It is well agreed that collective memory is the keystone of national identity (see, e.g., Rosoux, 2001). As Renan (1990) claimed, the spirit of the nation is composed of a rich heritage of shared memories and of the ambition to immortalize these memories in the present as well as of a long line of



“oblivions”—that is, events whose traces fade away in the process of the immortalization.

Collective memory does not provide an objective history of the past but a story about the past that is functional and relevant to the society's present existence and future aspirations. Thus, it creates a socially constructed narrative that has some basis in actual events but is biased, selective, and distorted in ways that meet present societal needs (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Pennebaker, Paez, & Rime, 1997). It is entrenched in the particular sociopolitical-cultural context that imprints its meaning (Wertsch, 2002). Connerton (1989) pointed out that “our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in the context which is causally connected with the past event and objects” (p. 2). In short, the societal beliefs encased in collective memory help to make sense of the past, illuminate the present, and serve as a basis for aspirations, vision, and plans for the future. This is their *raison d'être*. Thus, they must be adapted, reconstructed, and reappropriated to serve changing conditions as well as to fulfill societal needs and goals (Halbwachs, 1941/1992; Hilton & Liu, 2008; Kammen, 1991).

Smith (1999) explained that the story of the nation is based on a line of myths that combine, as any myth, seeds of historical truth with fabled extensions. Collective memory may include the nation's chronicles since its foundation, including essential past occurrences such as emancipation, unity agreements between factions, or, alternatively, exile, defeats, and wars, up to happenings in the present time. Among these foundational myths, the belief in the common origin of the nation's members is prominent. This belief connects members of the nation and constitutes grounds for the sense of a shared fate. In addition, it links the nation's present generation to its ethnic ancient origins by providing answers to the questions of when, where, and how the national collective came into existence. This joining between present and past fashions the nation as an extended family having a particular origin and subsequent historical continuity.

*Additional shared societal beliefs.* In addition to societal beliefs about territory and collective memory, society members espouse other societal beliefs that they see as crucially important for the society's existence. These beliefs are formed on the basis of collective experiences and serve to shape a perception of reality that is common to the society's members as well as to form a shared behavioral orientation. Their content can touch on various issues, experiences, expectations, justifications, and concerns. These beliefs are organized around themes and include the consideration of shared values, norms, goals, symbols, ideologies, self-images, and more

that define the society's members and distinguish them from other societies. Interconnected themes may be consolidated as an ethos, which is defined as a configuration of core societal beliefs that provides a society with a certain orientation (Bar-Tal, 2000). The ethos constitutes a coherent and systematic construct of knowledge about the society and as such serves as a central component in its collective identity (Bar-Tal, 2000; McClosky & Zaller, 1984). It provides the key characteristics of a society in a holistic way and points to the orientation of the society as well as its future direction of goals. Thus, for example, societies may have an ethos constructed around dominant societal beliefs concerning democracy, capitalism, or Islam.

Content provides the necessary seeds for the characterization of the nation. In fact, it expresses the culture of a society (Brewer & Masaki, 2007; Halloran & Kashima, 2006) and thus provides the unique features of the collective and stands at the core of its identity. In essence, it serves as a lens through which members of the collective see their world (see, e.g., Fishman, 1997). The source of much of the content is in past traditions that have shaped the particular national identity, whether these traditions are religious, cultural, nationalistic, or any combination of them (Hastings, 1997; Hutchinson, 1987; Smith, 1999, 2003). However, it is important to note that the significance that members of a nation attribute to this content changes according to circumstances. Moreover, some content evolves because of experiences that a collective undergoes and is thereafter constructed and reconstructed because of those changes (e.g., Oren, Bar-Tal, & David, 2004; Rousso, 1994; Schwartz, 2000). Thus, on one hand, content is shaped by the context in which the collective lives, and, on the other hand, the continuous reconstruction of content changes this social context.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present article attempts to delineate the complex and dynamic structure of the collective identity by incorporating two levels of analysis. The first level pertains to the micro-sociopsychological level, to collective members' recognition of and categorization as belonging to a group with the accompanying cognitive, emotional, and motivational consequences. This level of the individual identification with the collective is the necessary condition for the foundation of the macro-societal level of the collective identity, indicating the awareness of the collective's members that they share a fundamental desire to be part of their collective and to maintain it.

This awareness has important cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral implications, all at the

collective level. It determines how members of a collective view their shared reality with what kind of contents, what kinds of feelings they share, and the types of courses of action they may take. These are consequences of the recognition by members of the collective that they share membership in a single collective that is an important part of their being. These two levels, the micro and macro, reflect a general approach to collective identity that is conceptualized as possibly applicable to the analysis of various large-scale collectives such as ethnic groups, political movements and parties, religious groups, and nations.

Furthermore, we suggested that the macro-collective level has two pillars. One pillar consists of the generic features that generally characterize collective identities and indicate on the general level the extent and the qualities of thoughts, feelings, and courses of action. The other pillar, "the content of collective identity," addresses the particular repertoire that the collective carries that provides meaning to membership in the collective and in our example case in the nation. In the case of a national identity, it refers to the particular contents that are used to characterize the nation. Although some content categories, such as territory and collective memory, appear in many nations, their endowed meanings differ and thus furnish the boundaries that differentiate nations from one another. Moreover, each nation may have its own, supplementary repertoire of societal beliefs that gives meaning to its identity. Obviously, other macro-scale collectives such as religious groups, ethnic groups, and political groups may have different categories of particular contents that provide to them unique meanings.

The final part of the article aims at pointing out at various implications of the presented conceptual framework that delineate possible directions for research. We outline a few of them.

### *Interrelationships Among the Elements of Collective Identity*

We suggest that there are interrelationships between the two levels of the proposed conception and more specifically between the micro level of identification and each of the two pillars of the macro level as well as between them.<sup>10</sup> We do not claim causal directions for each of the interrelationships but point out the correlational relationships as each of the elements of collective identity is related in a reciprocal relationship with another element that we now elaborate.

Individual identification cannot be independent of the characteristics of collective identity, and these characteristics depend first of all on the nature and strength of identification. We can assume that the importance of

belonging to the collective, the emotional attachment, and the willingness to belong to it influence the generic characteristics of the shared sense of common fate and continuity, perception of uniqueness, coordination of activity, extent of sharing beliefs, concern for the welfare of the collective, and readiness for mobilization on behalf of the collective. That is, the higher the level of identification, the higher the extent of the above-noted generic features. Few studies have investigated this interrelationship on the collective level. Probably one of the unique lines of studies that show this pattern very clearly was performed by Sherif and his colleagues (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1969). They clearly demonstrated that formation of high identification with the group increased many of the discussed group features: shared sense of common fate, perception of uniqueness, coordination of activity, extent of sharing beliefs, concern for the welfare of the collective, and readiness for mobilization on behalf of the collective. On the individual level, in the various chapters of the book by Ellemers et al. (1999), accumulated knowledge about social identification is reviewed, which shows that those group members who have high identification with their group, in comparison to those who have low identification, feel highly committed to their group, are more inclined to protect their group's image, are more ready to act on behalf of the group, feel more solidarity with their group, share more sense of commonality, and are more willing to perform with the group members.

On the other hand, we also suggest that a high level of the activation of the generic features such as increased sense of common fate, uniqueness, sense of continuity, and high level of sharing societal beliefs together with high level of coordinated activities and mobilization leads to high level of identification. Roccas et al. (2008), in their recent review, presented various studies that show how the context that includes some of the outlined generic characteristics affects the various aspects of identification. That is, individual identification is greatly affected by the level of collective activities and shared societal beliefs, emotions, values, and norms.

We also propose that high identification with the collective influences the type of contents that the collectives produce. We can assume that, for example, in this case collective members with high identification will express a deep love and devotion to the collective as well as concern, solidarity, and so on. These contents can be reflected, for example, in various cultural products. On empirical level, it was found, for example, that higher levels of identification are associated with higher emotional and tangible linkage to the national territory and with more positive attitudes toward the national language (Fishman, 1997; Oakes, 2001). Also, Reicher and

Hopkins (2001) provided convincing evidence that high identification with a nation is highly related to various contents, including knowledge about collective memory and cultural symbols.

On the other hand, produced contents affect the level of identification of the collective members. We have to remember that contents are transformed and disseminated via various channels, institutions, and products, and they socialize members of the collective. Contents that deal with the type, intensity, or quality of identification, connecting it to the needs of the collective, the required mobilization, and lines of needed action, increase levels of identification, if are accepted as valid. As an example, we can bring the work of Hayes (1974), who analyzed the identification of the French with their nation. He argued that the French feel high identification with the nation and are supremely loyal to France. He attributed this tendency mostly to intense socialization and described how contents provided by the political system, education, the military forces, the churches, the press, radio and cinema, national associations, and national symbols and ceremonies were used for this purpose.

Content-based collective identity is also greatly related to the generic features. The disseminated content affects not only the level of identification but also the nature of the collective identity with its sense of common fate, perception of uniqueness and continuity, coordination of activity, level of sharing societal beliefs, and level of mobilization. Recently, Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, and Gundar (in press) provided numerous illustrations of how a sense of self-perceived collective victimhood (i.e., particular content) has profound influence on various levels of thoughts, feelings, and activities of national collectives. Likewise, Smith (2006) explained England's relative resistance to the process of unification of Europe in its collective memory as an antique nation characterized by strong current of religious separatism and its insular geopolitical situation. In this case, it means that particular contents influence sense of uniqueness, continuity, mobilization, and eventually coordinated action—all generic features. Finally Bar-Tal and his colleagues provided an extensive elaboration of how the beliefs about insecurity of the Israeli Jews based on the collective memory, experiences, and political and religious ideology have had an imprinting effect on the way the Jewish collective in Israel constructs its sense of common fate and other repertoires of societal beliefs and attitudes, perceives its continuity, mobilizes for the cause of establishing security, and executes lines of actions to secure its existence (Bar-Tal, 1991; Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992; Bar-Tal, Jacobson, & Klieman, 1998; Bar-Tal, Magal, & Halperin, in press).

In the other direction, we propose that high levels of generic features lead to increased production of collective

products with particular contents that emphasize solidarity, continuity, commonality, and so on. For example, a number of research lines indicate that sharing beliefs regarding certain territory or a specific place in this territory (e.g., a city) as being the essence of the national identity serve as a binding force of shared fate and as part of a nation's continuous national history. These reflections are related to intensive and extensive contentual expressions in national educational materials, national ceremonies, poetry, music, and the like (concerning southeastern European nations, see White, 2000; concerning Jewish identity, see O. Almog, 2004; Ben-Amos & Bar-Tal, 2004; Dror, 2008; Ravitski, 2004).

### *The Interrelationship Between Collective Identity and Context*

When individuals experience a sense of belonging by means of self-categorization as group members and then become aware that their fellow members share the same identification, their world changes. Not only do they become members of a particular collective, but also the developed collective identity impinges on their thinking, feeling, functioning, acting, producing, creating, and so on. These processes do not come about in a vacuum but in the context of the social world in which they live. Context provides multilayer conditions of different types, scopes, qualities in which individuals and collectives operate. It is possible to begin the deconstruction of the context with the broadest meaning and discuss the global conditions that have an effect on the collectives. It is well accepted in the present era that the global political, demographic, economic, and cultural conditions have an influence on the collective identity. Taking just two examples of the vast movement of people from one state to another or attempts to create transnational entities, we can detect their influence on both levels of the national identity—the level of individual identification with the collective and the macro level of collective identity with its both pillars. Recently, as a concrete example, Buchan et al. (2009) found that that globalization, the increasing interconnectedness of people worldwide, strengthens cosmopolitan attitudes by weakening the relevance of ethnicity, locality, and nationhood as sources of identification. That is, it broadens the group boundaries within which individuals perceive they belong. This process has to have an effect on the collective identity with its two foundations.

On a more specific local level, there is no doubt that the topographic and meteorological context in which the collectives live has an effect on both levels of the identity: the level of identification and the level of collective identity (see, e.g., Daniels, 1993; Ward, 2000). But we would like to extend somewhat the discussion

about the societal-cultural context. We believe that this context is multilayered, filled up with products of tangible and nontangible nature that have a great influence on the identity, structure, processes, and activities of the collective. The upper particular layer consists of the cultural context of social groups. This cultural context is constructed through years, shaped by the cumulative experiences of each collective. It includes products such as the tangible and nontangible symbols, scripts, habits, rules, narratives, concepts, and knowledge relating to one's group and other social categories. Together, these products represent the shared contents that provide meaning and rules of practice for society members. They serve as the fundamental building block for the construction of the collective identity (see, e.g., Sanchez, 1993).

Another, deeper layer of the societal-cultural context is the transitional context that consists of major events and major information that have wide resonance and have relevance for the well-being of group members and for the group as a whole. It engages collective members, holds a central position in public discourse and agenda, and generates information that forces them to reconsider, and often change, their repertoire (Bar-Tal & Sharvit, 2008). Major events, with their framing major information such as revolutions, intractable conflicts, wars, peace agreements, or even major natural disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis may influence not only the emerging contents but also the level of identification and the ways the collectives operate on the general level.

We suggest that the layers of contexts may change and concomitantly may change not only individuals' definitions of identity but also the collective meaning of identity and the content that characterizes it. Although the cultural context usually changes in a slow process, the transitional context may change in a faster pace as, for example, happened with the major event of the type of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack in the United States (see, e.g., Huddy, Khatib, & Capelos, 2002; Hutcheson, Domke, Billeaudeau, & Garland, 2004). Thus, one of the features of this approach is the assertion that the sociopsychological processes that underlie the formation of the two levels of collective identity are dependent on social context or, more precisely, on the intersection between past traditions and present context. Context determines the strength and type of identification as well as the quality and extent of the generic characteristics of collective identity and its content. But the process is not unidirectional—clearly collective members as active, creative, and thoughtful creatures affect the nature of the context in which they live as a collective. That is, their thoughts and activities resulting from their collective identity change the nature of the context on all of its layers. Thus, we recognize that the description refers to the ongoing reciprocal process of

change in which the context shapes the elements of the collective identity, and they in turn affect the layers of the context. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the rise of Nazism in Germany are two extreme examples how individuals by changing their collective identity changed the context in which they lived.

### *Characterization of the Collectives*

The proposed conception allows for the characterization of various collectives—in our case, nations. Nations differ with regard to the two levels of identity, and each level provides criteria for such characterization. Thus, nations can be described according to the strengths and types of identification, the extent and meaning of the six generic features of collective identity, and the endowed content of national identity. Various factors influence the strength of each of the proposed characteristics and their qualitative varieties: political ones on the basis of political ideologies and polarization (e.g., Hammack, 2008; Jost, 2006), economic ones on the basis of such factors as stratification and distribution of wealth (e.g., Esping-Andersen, 1993), and cultural ones on the basis of traditions, norms, and practices. In the latter vein, cultural psychology devotes many efforts to elucidate differences among cultures, including those that pertain to the proposed features of collective identity (see, e.g., reviews by Berry, Segall, & Kagitcibasi, 1997; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998).

Thus, for example, the behavioral expression of each of the collective identity's components may be different in collectivist versus individualistic societies (e.g., Triandis, 1995) or in societies that focus on an interdependent versus independent construction of selfhood (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Also, although some nations emphasize elements of the past in their collective identity, other nations emphasize elements of the future. There is not doubt that revolutionary societies emphasize the future whereas traditional societies base their identity to a larger extent on the past (Allen, 2008; Connerton, 1989; Hanlon & White, 2000; Lipset, 1997).

The model also allows us to monitor changes and identity crises within each nation by measuring the intensity and quality of identification over time and analyzing controversies regarding its meaning as well as assessing the many different types of variables that determine type and strength identity at the micro and macro levels (see David, 2007, concerning Jewish-Israeli identity; Holy, 1996, concerning Czech identity; and Huntington, 2005, concerning American identity).

### *Continuity of the Collective Identity*

The model presented here also leaves an opening for the investigation and understanding of the mutual influences



of the past on the perception of the present and the future and on the contingent effects of present and future goals on the perception of the past. In the case of the national identity, it is not a static foundation passed down from generation to generation; however, neither is it a fabricated construction lacking anchorage in the national past. Pursuant to the conceptual model, identity is conceived as a sociopsychological entity that is evident in its constant dynamics within the widest spectrum of the cultures into which human beings are born—and the experiences, emotions, motivations, beliefs, and choices made by individuals to shape reality and build a common present and future. The past is a very deep and vast well, but it is limited by its temporal boundaries and by the symbols, traditions, beliefs, and primary ethos, rituals, and texts that can be drawn from this well. These dynamics modify and renew interpretations of the components of identity to meet present needs and the future national goals, which members of the nation consider to be essential. The constant test of will and the recurring need and ability to reformulate identity propel the wheels of identity formation from generation to generation while relying on the anchors of identity shaped by the national past.

In sum, the primary significance of the model proposed above is its positioning of the individual and of the people who compose the collective as social subjects at the center of the study of collectives. The model guides us to search for sources of collective identity in human beliefs, attitudes, emotions, values, wishes, and behaviors. In other words, the basic claim of the model is that collective identity is the outcome of the subjective sociopsychological repertoire of those who lay claim to it. Once human beings form an identification with the collective, they think about it, develop attachment and emotions toward it, reflect on it, and act in line with their thoughts and feelings. Naturally, as with any type of social phenomenon, people are influenced by various factors exerted on them within the context in which they live and function. Specifying political, economic, and cultural processes that shape collective identities, including national identities, is important and essential in and of itself. However, it does not fully answer critical questions, such as what collective identity means from the perspective of the individual. And what is the nature of this particular collective bond? The present conception attempts to provide answers to these important questions. It suggests mechanisms that allow members of a collective to act together in their social world. The shared social identification transforms relations among individuals in such a way as to enable their effective coaction and specifies various common ways of realizing their shared collective identity. It is a collective identity that allows not only shared awareness of being

part of the large-scale social entity but also the formation of commitment and involvement as well as mobilization for the collective actions. It is the collective identity that serves as a foundation for large-scale marches that can lead nations to two extreme opposite directions—to just, cooperative, and peaceful journeys or to destructive, malevolent, and evil trips. The world has been experiencing both of them.

In summarizing also the insights about our example, national identity, we would like to note that the social, political, economic, and technological developments in societies and in the world nowadays create significant challenges to the establishment of national identity with its sociopsychological meaning (Ben-Rafael, 2001; Ben-Rafael & Sternberg, 2001; Cesarani & Fulbrook, 1996; Glazer, 1997; Grillo, 1998; Katoryano, 2002; Rex, 1996; Soysal, 1994). New ways of global human cooperation have been opened (Gupta, 1997; Kaul, Grunberg, & Stern, 1999; Spybey, 1996), but at the same time more and more individuals as well as national and various ethnic groups wonder about their uniqueness (Moghaddam, 2008; Taylor, 1994). This fairly new situation challenges individuals' identification with the nation, which turns out to be more complex and multifaceted and therefore also challenges the macro-level components of collective identity with its two pillars (generic features and particular content). Above all, it challenges the possibility to constitute a reflective collective identity that anchors itself in a shared meaningful past and sees itself as a community of fate, solidarity, and mutual collective responsibility. This is not to say that the sociopsychological components are irrelevant to our time; on the contrary, finding contemporary ways for constructing them is the present challenge, under the changing economic, demographic, political, societal, and cultural conditions. As Calhoun (2007) pointed out, "nations matter" because they organize "something considerable in who we are." They offer "categories for understanding the demarcation of cultures, the ways in which individuals belong to larger groups, and the ways in which such groups participate in history" (p. 171). That is why the sociopsychological components of the collective identity are essential not just for the existence of national identities but also for analyzing social phenomena such as conflicts, loyalties, setting new goals, mobilization, integration, national deliberation, identity crises, and political and social change.

Collective identity thus is a powerful social mechanism for creating social reality and explaining social functioning of the collectives and their change. The concept of collective identity therefore deserves to be positioned as one of the central concepts in the social sciences, particularly in social psychology, and social scientists

should invest much further research to expand its understanding.

## NOTES

1. Gleason (1983) offers a comprehensive outlook on the history of the usage of the term *identity* in the social sciences, particularly in psychology and sociology. Interestingly, he observed that in the international encyclopedia of the social sciences, published in the early 1930s, the term was missing altogether, whereas in the 1968 edition two long articles were subsumed under the entries "Psychological Identity" and "Political Identification."

2. We recognize that it is possible to develop a discussion on civic nationalism, but we focus on ethnic nationalism only. For many years, the distinction first suggested by Kohn (1944) between "ethnic nationalism" and "civic nationalism" has been accepted in nationality research. Recently, some scholars have challenged this distinction and its specific aspects (e.g., D. Brown, 2000; Calhoun, 2007; Jakobson & Rubinstein, 2008). Actually, it is Smith (2000) himself who clarified that his definition of the term *nation* includes both ethnic and civic components. In this article, we focus on the definition of the nation put forward by Smith as a nation that is at its base ethnic.

3. These two aspects of the motivation for identification with the nation are compatible, at least partially, with the division suggested by Kelman (1969) between the sentimental motivation that emanates from the belief that the nation represents certain facets of the individual's identity such as values and culture and instrumental motivations that presume that the nation is a device through which the individual and the society can obtain goals and protect interests. The combination of the two provides an extensive explanation for the question of the motivations for membership in a nation.

4. Jakobson and Rubinstein (2008) noted that even French nationalism, which is perceived as civic, educates French citizens in accordance with the phrase "our savior fathers."

5. In his book *Chosen Peoples*, Smith (2003) developed the argument that the nation is "a sacred communion of the people," meaning a community dedicated to finding and cultivating authenticity and ideals of autonomy, unity, and national identity in a historical homeland. He listed four sacred elements of the nation that are drawn, among other things, from religious belief systems, among them the myth of divine election. A canonical expression of this myth is found in the Bible with the election of the people of Israel, but it occurs elsewhere, especially in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Smith distinguished between two types of myths of choice: the *choice of a covenant*, in which the community assumes the duty to fulfill God's demands and to act according to His laws to earn His protection, enjoy prosperity, and safely inhabit the sacred land it was given; and the *choice of mission*, which is the more frequent type, in which the community believes that God has delegated it with a mission that will draw salvation nearer, that is, the nation constitutes a device for the fulfillment of a Divine Plan.

6. Societal beliefs are defined as shared cognitions by the society members that address themes and issues with which the society members are particularly occupied and that contribute to their sense of uniqueness (Bar-Tal, 2000).

7. Language as a representation of national culture is especially strong in both the ethnic model of nationalism (as in Germany) and the civilian model (as in France).

8. On this matter, see, for example, Bauman (1995), Glover (1989), and Ricoeur (1992).

9. Herman (1977) claimed that the collective time axis has several dimensions, among them *orientation* (reliance mainly on the past, present, or the future), *range* (restriction of the time axis to events that have occurred in the recent past or expansion of the axis through extension to a far past or future), *differentiation* (division of the past or future into distinct fragments), and *shaping of the structure* (which explains in what way the past has led to the present, and how they both affect the future). Horowitz and Lissak (1989) mentioned three dimensions: attitudes toward the past, present, and future; the pace of

time, which determines the rate of social development (gradual, revolutionary, or a combination of both); and timing, meaning the coordination of the developmental pace in different areas (economics, politics, immigration, etc.).

10. We recognize that there are also more specific relationships among the three aspects of identification, the generic features, and the various categories of contents. Their elaboration goes beyond the scope of the present article but opens possibilities for their further investigation.

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