RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Social Identity, Social Categorization and Social Comparison in Intergroup Behaviour.

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THE EXIT OF SOCIAL MOBILITY AND THE VOICE OF SOCIAL CHANGE: 
NOTES ON THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF INTERGROUP RELATIONS

As I shared until recently the puzzlement of M. Jourdain in not knowing (at least for some time) that I was writing prose, it would perhaps be appropriate to introduce these notes with an explanatory account of a brief encounter. Towards the end of March 1974 I was spending a few days in Cambridge, Mass., on my way to deliver some lectures at the University of Michigan. When visiting some friends, I met for the first time Albert Hirschman who a little later in the evening asked me the kind of question that no well drilled academic ever should in such circumstances take seriously or, even less, answer seriously: what was I going to talk about at Ann Arbor? But the question was asked with great courtesy and apparent interest; therefore I briefly answered in (I hope) no more than five minutes. Next morning, Hirschman appeared bearing a "slim volume". On its first page I later found an inscription: "Pour Henri Tajfel, avec le pressentiment d'un dialogue". The book was his Exit, voice and loyalty (1970)¹. The present notes are a first step towards validating the self-fulfilling prophecy of Hirschman's inscription.

Amongst the major themes of the Ann Arbor lectures (Tajfel, 1974a)² was a discussion of certain theoretical insufficiencies in the social psychological theories of intergroup behaviour, of some possible reasons for these shortcomings, of proposals for a new theory, of preliminary studies relating to this theory, and of directions for further research. Some of this discussion converges closely, as I hope to show, with Hirschman's analysis of the role of exit and voice (and their various combinations) in the functioning of "firms, organizations and states". But after this common basis for analysis has been taken for granted, my purpose

¹ All quotations from Exit, voice and loyalty used in the present text are taken from the second printing (1972); so are the page numbers of the quotations.

² These lectures will be published in a modified form; copies of the present text are available on request. A preliminary version of one part of the lectures appeared in Social Science Information (Tajfel, 1974b).
in the present paper will become twofold: (i) to suggest certain extensions of the "exit-voice" analysis to a more explicitly intergroup context; and (ii) to show that, within this context, some forms of "voice" can easily become a powerful mechanism for the maintenance of status quo rather than for the stimulation of effective change. The discussion will remain anchored to certain concepts and problems in social psychology which constitute its point of departure.

1. Exit and voice in the social psychology of intergroup behaviour.

It is possible to conceive the development of social psychology in the last two generations or so as reflecting the preoccupation of its practitioners with four large classes of problems. The first of these concerns the modes of functioning of "basic" or "general" psychological processes in the social behaviour of an individual. For example, the laws and findings relating individual frustration to individual aggression find their counterpart in the studies of generalization, inhibition or displacement of aggression in a large variety of social interaction settings (e.g. Berkowitz, 1962, 1969). Or, the general tendency to seek cognitive consistency (or reduce inconsistency) finds its widespread application in a multiplicity of theories of attitude change (e.g. Abelson et al., 1968 - the largest compendium to date). Or, attempts are made to provide theoretical continuity between the general cognitive processes of human judgement and categorization and their reflection in social settings (e.g. Appley, 1971; Eiser and Stroebe, 1972; Sherif and Hovland, 1961).

The second class of problems is, in a way, a mirror-image of the first. The long tradition of theory and research on socialization and personality development has largely been devoted to an analysis of the emotional, motivational and cognitive functioning of an individual as this is moulded or affected by his social environment. The literature here is so varied and immense that examples need hardly be given.

The point of departure for the study of the third class of problems was an interest in the functioning of interindividual human relationships which, in the present classification, include behaviour in small social groups as well as interaction between individuals. This has probably been until very recently the dominant trend. For example, in one of the influential textbooks published in the
late 'sixties (Jones and Gerard, 1967), two chapters are introductory and five are concerned with our previous two categories; the remaining ten chapters would fit without much strain into the "interindividual" class of problems.

Finally, and largely in response to a variety of external pressures, there has been in recent years a rapid increase of interest (which is also a return to an older tradition) in what might be called the "social psychology of social problems". The vigorous existence led since many years by, for example, the Journal of Social Issues witnesses to the fact that these issues were never fully forgotten by social psychologists. But if we are to believe, with the benefit of hindsight just given us by reaching the mid-decade, a prophecy implicit in the contents of a book on Social psychology in the seventies (Wrightsman, 1972) written at the very beginning of these turbulent years, then war, racism, social class and ethnic differences, the "nature of social change", political repression and "community applications of social psychology" are edging their way towards the centre of the stage.

All this is no more, of course, than a rough and ready classification in which overlaps are so numerous and omissions so glaring that it could not hope to withstand a serious scrutiny of its confusions. It does, however, have its short-lived usefulness because of one distinction that it helps to make. Of the four classes of problems mentioned, the last one has always tended to benefit or suffer (depending upon one's point of view) from a large measure of theoretical extra-territoriality. The social psychology of social problems was (is?) considered to be mainly "applied"; and this means that theoretical approaches to it drew much of their inspiration from one or more of the other three categories. The micro tended to guide the macro in social psychology.

And so we come to the social psychology of intergroup relations - to a large extent a set of "applied" problems. National, racial, ethnic or social class relations may be considered as amounting together to what is the substance of social conflict, since conflict becomes "social" when it involves relations between large-scale social groups or "categories" rather than between small groups or between individuals. In social psychology, much of the work relevant to various aspects of social conflict proceeded to extend to it the implications of the theory and research from the first three classes of problems previously mentioned.
Thus, we have been much concerned with the development of prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour in individuals - and we drew upon general theories of individual motivation and cognition, or upon the etiology and the symptomatology of personality development in order to account for various forms of hostility against outgroups. The study of interindividual behaviour provided us with theories of competition and cooperation, and more generally, of the interindividual adjustment of goals and strategies which, as it was hoped implicitly or sometimes stated explicitly, could contribute to our understanding of the psychology of the wider forms of conflict. No doubt, a great deal has been achieved and still more can probably be done. There is also no doubt that an understanding of these individual and interindividual processes may be necessary for the analysis of some aspects of the psychology of social conflict. The difficulties arise with regard to the question whether it is also sufficient.

The answer to this question depends, as usual, upon the emergence (or absence) of new structural variables in the "wider" situations to which extrapolations are being made. Hirschman's discussion of the role of exit and voice in the functioning of "firms, organizations and states" provides some pertinent propositions and a language in which to describe at least one such set of emergent variables relevant to the psychological aspects of social conflict. This was by no means his principal aim; if he had any wish to arrange a marriage, it was to be between prospective partners from political science and from economics. My hope is that the suggestions made in the present paper may lead to a reasonably happy ménage à trois.

The language of exit and voice is the prose which led me to assume earlier in this text the stance of M. Jourdain. It converges closely with the language of "social mobility" and "social change" adopted in a previous paper (Tajfel, 1974a). In the first description in his book of the "exit and voice options" Hirschman (op.cit.) wrote: "Some customers stop buying the firm's products or some members leave the organization: this is the exit option" (p. 4). And: "The firm's customers or the organization's members express their dissatisfaction directly to management or to some other authority to which management is subordinate or through general protest addressed to anyone who cares to listen: this is the voice option" (p. 4). Very soon we learn that "voice is political action by
excellence" (p.16). Much of the book is devoted to an analysis of the functioning of voice when exit from buying a product, or from an organization or a state is or is not possible; and to the difficult problems of the "elusive optimal mix of exit and voice" in maintaining or obtaining an efficient level of functioning in a variety of social organizations.

The two equivalent descriptions (Tajfel, op.cit.) of social mobility and social change are as follows:

"What I mean by social mobility is an individual's perception that he can improve his position in a social situation, or more generally, move from one position to another, as an individual. The first direct implication of this definition is that the individual's system of beliefs about the society in which he lives contains the expectation that, in principle, he is able to leave his present social group or groups and move to other groups which suit him better. Social mobility in this sense consists therefore of a subjective structuring of a social system (however small or large the system may be) in which the basic assumption is that the system is flexible and permeable, that it permits a fairly free movement of the individual particles of which it consists. At this point of the argument, it does not matter very much whether the causation of free individual movement is perceived as being due to luck, merit, hard work, talent or other attributes of individuals. The concept of social change, as I would like to use it in a social psychological sense, is at the other extreme of the subjective modes of structuring the social system in which an individual lives. It refers basically to his belief that he is enclosed within the walls of the social group of which he is a member; that he cannot move out on his own into another group in order to improve or change his position or his conditions of life; and that therefore the only way for him to change these conditions (or for that matter, to resist the change of these conditions, if he happens to be satisfied with them) is together with his group as a whole, as a member of it rather than as someone who leaves it. In other words, in the old American usage of "passing" and "not passing" this is in some ways similar to the "not passing" extreme" (pp5-6).

Here, however, the aims of the two discussions diverge. As just stated, Hirschman's analysis of the "responses to decline" is largely concerned with the relative efficiency of the exercise of the two options, or their various combinations, in preventing the decline in the functioning of various kinds of social institutions, public or private. The distinction between "social mobility" and "social change" attempts to define two (theoretical) extremes in a continuum of individuals' beliefs about the relationship between the social group or groups to which they belong.
and other groups. The "behavioural" translation of this continuum of beliefs relates it to three other pairs of extremes which are associated with it:

"The relationship I outlined earlier between intergroup behaviour and social change must be supplemented by another theoretical continuum in addition to the one moving from the belief structure of social mobility to the belief structure of social change. This is a continuum which, when it is related to the previous one, provides a bridge between a system of social beliefs and a system of social behaviour. This second continuum can be applied to many interactions between two or more people. One extreme of it would be represented by an individual interacting with others in terms of self; the other extreme - by an individual interacting with others entirely in terms of his and their group membership. Neither of these extremes can probably be found in "real life"; but there is no doubt that approaching the one or the other is crucial to the form that one's social behaviour will take.

There are three important points concerning this behavioural progression. The first concerns the relationship between the social change-social mobility continuum of structure of beliefs and the self-group continuum of the structure of social interaction. On the basis of my argument so far, a prediction can be made that, in any situation perceived as relevant to relations with another group, the nearer an individual is to the social change extreme on the belief continuum, the nearer he will be to the group extreme of the behavioural one. The second point concerns a prediction about individual differences: the nearer a collection of individuals is to the social change end of the belief continuum, the more uniformity they will display in their behaviour towards the relevant outgroup. This prediction must be backed up by considerations about the nature of certain social communication processes to which I shall return later. The third prediction is closely related to the second, as it follows logically from it: the nearer a collection of individuals is to the social change extreme of the belief continuum, the less they will take into account in their intergroup behaviour the individual differences between members of the outgroup, and the more they will react to them en masse, treating them as undifferentiated items in a unified social category." (op.cit. pp.8-9).

The main purpose of this continuum-splitting exercise was to contribute to a social psychological theory of intergroup relations from which predictions could be made about certain uniformities in the behaviour and attitudes of members of some social groups (or categories) towards members of other social groups (or categories). (Descriptions of other theoretical assumptions and of various predictions from them can be found in Tajfel 1974a and b). The convergences with Hirschman's exit-voice pair (I shall discuss loyalty later) are of two kinds: (i) the nature of the concepts used and of some consequences following from them; and
(ii) the relationship of the general approach to certain strands of an intellectual tradition.

One of the phases of Hirschman's discussion also uses a continuum in which the transition from a fully free (or costless) exit to its virtual impossibility interacts with the appearance of voice and with conditions for its effectiveness. We move here from the free and easy change of a brand of toothpaste (if, for example, its cost increases or its quality deteriorates) to an enormous variety of social situations in which the cost of exit is, subjectively or objectively, so high as to make it impossible or unbearable - such as may be the case with family, national or political affiliations. In between these extremes, the various degrees of access to exit may determine the strength of voice, or of attempts to change from within a deteriorating situation. This is well summed up in the quotation by Hirschman of Erikson's (1964) dictum: "You can actively flee, then, and you can actively stay put".

Sometimes, of course, you cannot actively flee and you must stay put, actively or not; or, having unsuccessfully tried to flee, or seen other people try, you may come to believe that escape is impossible and that you must take the consequences of staying put. These consequences include those to which Hirschman referred in describing voice as "political action by excellence". For a social psychologist, they would imply the numerous behavioural and attitudinal effects on intergroup relations of the belief system previously described as "social change"; particularly so when the effective diffusion of the idea that "passing" individually from one's own group to another is impossible or extremely difficult causes more and more people from that group to feel and act in unison.

This form of voice in intergroup attitudes and behaviour need not only apply to those groups who wish (or need) to modify the nature of their relationships to other groups. It may also appear in groups who aim at preserving or strengthening the status quo. I shall return to this issue later.

The second point of convergence relates more directly to exit and "social mobility". In his discussion of the cultural and historical background of exit and voice in the United States, Hirschman (op. cit., chapter 8) refers to the "extraordinarily privileged position" which has been accorded to exit in the American tradition:
"The traditional American idea of success confirms the hold which exit has had on the national imagination. Success — or, what amounts to the same thing, upward social mobility — has long been conceived in terms of evolutionary individualism. The successful individual who starts out at a low rung of the social ladder, necessarily leaves his own group as he rises; he "passes" into, or is "accepted" by, the next higher group. He takes his immediate family along, but hardly anyone else." (pp.108-109).

In contrast, "the black power doctrine represents a totally new approach to upward mobility because of its open advocacy of the group process. It had immense shock value because it spurned and castigated a supreme value of the American society — success via exit from one's group" (ibid., p.112). This "supreme value" seems to have been reflected in some of the intellectual traditions of social psychology. A distinction can be made "between two possible kinds of theories of intergroup behaviour . . . (those) concerned with the inter-individual psychology of intergroup behaviour and those concerned with the social psychology of intergroup behaviour. It is theories of the first kind, the inter-individual ones, which have been predominant. Their general implication is that the study of processes responsible for various forms of interaction between individuals as individuals will tell us all — or most — that we need to know about forms of interaction between individuals as members of separate groups which stand in various kinds of social relations to one another" (Tajfel, op.cit., pp.3-4).

Consequently "most of our social psychology of intergroup behaviour derives from the belief structure of social mobility, and very little of it from the belief structure of social change. In parallel, and as might be expected, most of our social psychology of intergroup behaviour applies to the behaviour of individuals who are assumed to have the belief structure of social mobility and very little of it to the behaviour of individuals who are assumed to have the belief structure of social change" (pp.6-7).

Two additional comments need to be made to conclude this general discussion of convergences. The first relates to the rough distinction, made earlier in this paper, between the four wide categories of problems in social psychology. It would be grossly simplistic to attribute the interindividual tradition of "social mobility" in the social psychology of intergroup relations to nothing but the overwhelming predominance of the "exit option" in American social history. Much of
it goes back to the background of the social psychologists' theoretical concern with the first three categories of problems enumerated above - which are mainly individual or interindividual. The second point is that if Hirschman, Hofstadter (1945) and others are correct about "the hold which exit has had on the national imagination" and about success having "long been conceived in terms of evolutionary individualism", then it follows that "most of our social psychology of intergroup behaviour" should apply "to the behaviour of individuals who are assumed to have the belief structure of social mobility". Undoubtedly, this is why good progress has been made in our understanding of the individual patterns of prejudice, discrimination and hostility. But the intention of the present argument is not to question the validity of much of this work; the concern is not with its achievements but with its limitations.

The American tradition of exit developed against a background of belief in individual mobility which, although it is by no means exclusively American, has probably been more salient in the social history of the United States than almost anywhere else. This tradition has been weaker elsewhere, and almost non-existent in some cultures (including many ex-"primitive" ones). This being the case, the question arises whether findings derived from a social context overwhelmingly dominated by the exit (or social mobility) option can be said to have a wider general validity. Moreover, an explicit social psychology of voice or "social change" in intergroup relations is as necessary in the United States as it is anywhere else. The example of black power is one case in point, and many other similar social and national movements are not far behind - in America and elsewhere.

There is, however, one further point which is equally important. It is banal to say that in the social past (or present) of the United States, as in so many other countries, the belief in, or the myth of, individual mobility was conceived by many not to apply with indiscriminately equal generosity, liberality and force to everybody. This denial of equal opportunity (or sometimes "ability") to scramble up the social ladder to members of some social groups is one of the psychological effects of the "objective" intergroup conflicts of interest; but it also finds its roots in some fundamental aspects of the social comparison processes. To put it crudely, very often we are what we are because "they" are not what we are. The
psychological and "superior" distinctiveness of a social group, sometimes achieved at the cost of strenuous efforts, must be maintained and preserved if the group is to conserve some kind of a common and valued identity. It is at this point that voice will be used, sometimes in remarkable unison, by members of the "superior" groups, particularly since exit is very often unthinkable for them. At this point of the argument, this function of voice is stressed because it points to an additional and important limitation of the "social mobility" approach to the psychology of intergroup relations, even against the background of the American tradition of exit. I shall return to it in more detail later in the discussion of the contribution of voice to the preservation of status quo in intergroup relations and behaviour.

2. Group exit and group chorus

In a previous contribution to this journal's series of papers on the exit and voice theme, Coleman (1974) wrote:

"Intrinsic to the paradigm of exit and voice which Hirschman (1970) has set forth is the recognition that social structure is composed of two kinds of actors: persons and corporate actors. For it is these persons (my italics) for whom the problem of implementing their will reduces to the dilemma of exit, that is, withdrawal of resources from the corporate actor, or voice, which attempts to control the direction of action of the corporate actor." (p.7).

A little further in the same paper, Coleman adds: "Hirschman was largely concerned with the maintenance of the efficiency of corporate actors and with the processes through which persons (my italics) contribute to that maintenance" (ibid.).

In pursuing the implications of the paradigm of exit and voice for the social mobility - social change continuum one must take note of a certain asymmetry in the two respective points of departure. Social mobility is exit of an individual from his group. Social change is the situation in which the extreme difficulty or impossibility of individual exit leads at least some of the people concerned to develop, or try to develop, an effective common voice for their group. The various modes of this voice, or the conditions under which these modes may develop are not of direct concern at this point of the argument (cf. Tajfel, 1974a...
and b). The asymmetry between voice and "social change" resides in the
correlation of the relation, described by Coleman, of persons to corporate actors
with the relations of members of one group to other groups. In both cases voice
will be used in its various forms. But in the case of a group, the persons
composing it may be concerned with the prevention of decline in the "efficiency"
(i.e. conditions of life, status, opportunities, etc.) of the corporate actor which,
in this instance, is their own group. Therefore, in an organization consisting of
many groups, their voice may have to be directed towards a change in the nature
of the relations between their own and other groups, i.e. other corporate actors.
In this process voice may become a chorus.

An example of similar asymmetry is provided by the notion of relative
deprivation, as it has sometimes been used (explicitly or implicitly) by social
psychologists. The focus of the theories has been on individuals comparing
themselves with other individuals (e.g. Festinger, 1954, on social comparison).
This is entirely adequate as long as conclusions are drawn about the effects of
these comparisons on interindividual attitudes and behaviour - which is what
Festinger has been aiming to do. As a matter of fact, he explicitly denied the
possibility of operation of social comparison so understood in the context of
intergroup relations: "Comparisons with members of a different status group,
either higher or lower, may sometimes be made on a phantasy level, but very rarely
in reality" (op.cit. p.135). Festinger's interindividual emphasis is closely
related to the economic version of relative deprivation, the "relative income
hypothesis", which Hirschman (1973) - after Duesenberry - describes as follows:
"the welfare of an individual varies inversely with the income or the consumption
of those persons with whom he associates" (p.546).

Difficulties begin when these interindividual comparisons are transposed to
intergroup situations. One of them concerns a basic canon of the social comparison
theory in social psychology and of the relative income hypothesis in economics:
people who provide the basis for comparisons must not be too different from those
who are doing the comparing. I have argued elsewhere (Tajfel, 1974a) that this
limitation does not hold in the case of intergroup comparisons in which the
requirement of a certain degree of similarity between the comparer and the
compared is replaced by the perceived legitimacy of the perceived relationship
between the groups. If perception of illegitimacy enters the comparison, then we are soon very far indeed from Festinger's assertion that comparisons with members of groups of different status happen "very rarely in reality" and perhaps even further from his "phantasy levels". The difference between the two kinds of comparisons is simply described: in the case of interindividual comparisons, a person relates his position to that of other persons; in the case of intergroup comparisons, an individual compares himself as a member of his own group with other individuals as members of their groups, or with outgroups conceptualized as an entity. The questions are: under what conditions do these intergroup comparisons become widely diffused within a group, and what then are their social political and psychological consequences. But these are large issues outside the scope of this paper.

Let us return to the asymmetry of voice and chorus. In the case of the social comparison theory a collection of interindividual comparisons is sometimes endowed with the capacity to contribute to long-term uniformities of behaviour in large masses of people (e.g. Berkowitz, 1972), although how this is supposed to happen remains a little obscure. In Hirschman's exit-voice analysis, transpositions of this kind are not made. Also in his discussion of "changing tolerance for income inequality in the course of economic development" (Hirschman, 1973), there is a clear awareness of the psychological differences between groups which can afford to wait for a time to catch up with others and those which feel they cannot:

"... the group that does not advance must be able to empathise, at least for a time, with the group that does. In other words, the two groups must not be divided by barriers that are or are felt as impassable." (p.553).

He returns to the theme in suggesting that the temporary patient waiting by some while others advance "need not happen if each class is composed of ethnic or religious groups that are differentially involved in the growth process. Hence, the contrast between fairly unitary and highly segmented society is particularly relevant for our topic" (op. cit., pp.553-4).

In Hirschman's analysis voice comes from a collection of individuals (sometimes organized into a group) who wish to change the institution or the organization of which they feel themselves to be an inherent part. In one fundamental sense, this may also be true of a social group which attempts to change its
relationship to other groups within a larger social structure which is common to all of them. But if the exit-voice analysis is to be applied, the question arises of how, if at all, is this chorus form of voice related to the potentiality or the actuality of group exit.

There are two kinds of group exit, discussed by Hirschman from his perspective, which are of interest here. The first of these is opting out, or the """cop-out" movement of groups like the hippies" which is "flight rather than fight" (op. cit., p.108), i.e. exit without voice. This exit is no more than temporary for some of the people involved; but their choice to come back (or not to come back, in the case of the permanent or long-term opters-out) is not dependent upon the past instrumentalities of their use of voice. If they come back, it is because they have changed, or society has changed or they think society has changed. In addition, they often become a group with well-defined common interests and a common identity only after they have opted out (e.g. in communes) rather than before; so that, just as in the case of voice we are dealing, in Coleman's (op. cit.,) words, with "the processes through which persons contribute to (the) maintenance" of a corporate actor, here we are dealing with persons who wish to get as far away as they can from a vast collection of corporate actors. In this sense, therefore, their exit cannot be considered as relevant in the context of the group exit-group voice relationship.

The other kind of group exit is boycott (Hirschman, op.cit., p.86). It is a "phenomenon on the borderline between voice and exit", since this action "is undertaken for the specific and explicit purpose of achieving a change of policy on the part of the boycotted organization" (ibid.) and is accompanied by "a promise of re-entry" should the desired changes take place. To be effective, boycott (like a strike) cannot, of course, be an action by isolated individuals.

This "true hybrid of the two mechanisms" (ibid.,) raises a number of interesting psychological questions about the relationship between a dissatisfied group and the organizational or institutional structure defining the position of that group vis-a-vis other groups which are within the same structure. For example, an underprivileged group in a strongly stratified social system (i.e. a system preventing social mobility and/or a belief in this option) cannot really exit; there is nowhere to go, unless all of its members chose to emigrate, or - as in the case
of ethnic or national groups - the exit option is fought for in the form of a separatist movement. The possibility of an exit which is neither emigration nor separation must be sought elsewhere, and like Hirschman's boycott, it is bound to be a "hybrid of the two mechanisms" of exit and voice. But in the case of social groups which are strongly disaffected and see their only hope in a fundamental change of the system, it is also a hybrid from another point of view. The individuals involved are strongly identified with one of the corporate actors (their own group); but the efficiency of functioning of that corporate actor is part and parcel of the functioning of a wider system consisting of their own and other groups. Therefore, the prevention of a continuing decline in the functioning of the corporate actor (the ingroup) may be perceived as possible only through a change (more or less fundamental) in the functioning of the wider multi-group system.

In such cases, one of the solutions which may be adopted is as much of a hybrid of exit and voice as is boycott. It is obviously voice since it is a form of political or social action from within; it is also exit or threatened exit to the extent that it implies a refusal to accept the rules by which the present relationships between the groups are regulated, and contains a "promise of re-entry" when these rules are changed. Once again we have a continuum here which moves from total acceptance of the rules to partial acceptance to total rejection.

This continuum closely reflects a progressive transition from group voice to group exit. The relationship in this transition between the psychological and the "objective" determinants of group exit can be considered, once again, in terms of legitimacy. But here an interaction between three forms of it would have to be taken into account: the legitimacy of the intergroup relationship as it is perceived by the disaffected group; the legitimacy of this relationship as it is perceived by the other groups involved; and an "objective" definition (i.e. a set of rules and regulations) of legitimacy, whenever such a thing is possible.

In considering these three kinds of legitimacy, it can be assumed that group exit (or the threat of it) will be, on many occasions, the more likely the greater is the discrepancy between the first two kinds of legitimacy, and the narrower are the confines of action from within (voice) encompassed by the third. On the face of it, the second part of this statement seems to contradict Hirschman's view that "if
exit is followed by severe sanctions the very idea of exit is going to be repressed and the threat (of it) will not be uttered for fear that the sanctions will apply to the threat as well as to the act itself" (op. cit., pp.96-97). There is no doubt that this proposition holds in a vast number of cases for individual exit or a collection of individual exits. But it would be useful to consider the many important exceptions to it which may occur in the relations between separate groups within a system rather than in the relations between persons and corporate actors. Although as a social psychologist I should tread most gingerly in domains which are far removed from my own, it seems not unreasonable to assume that in many multi-group systems these important exceptions are likely to occur when the contribution from the disaffected group is essential to the continuing efficient functioning of the system as a whole.

The social psychological consequences of this kind of actual or threatened group exit can be discussed in terms of its relationship to the impossibility or difficulty of individual exit from the ingroup. Some of them are clearly implicit in Hirschman's discussion of loyalty which, as he writes, will be needed more (together with a cohesive ideology) at the "densely occupied lower end of the scale" consisting of a ranking of "organizations . . . in order of quality, prestige, or some other desirable characteristic" (op. cit., p.82). The tendency to try for this kind of individual exit, or even to conceive it as a possibility, may be in this case inversely related to the perceived reality or potentiality of group exit. This relationship can become a powerful ingredient of ingroup loyalty. The second social psychological consequence (related to Hirschman's cohesive ideology) is the increasing uniformity within the group of the relevant ingroup and outgroup attitudes and behaviour - a phenomenon which was mentioned earlier in this paper. In this case, a social psychological analysis of the situation must take explicitly into account the increased sharing by many individuals of their "expectations about, and evaluations of, other people's behaviour" (Tajfel, 1972, p.111).

In turn, the positive feedback triggered into action by this sharing of expectations and evaluations provides a parallel to the joys of participation which find their place amongst Hirschman's (1974) "new economic arguments in favour of voice" (p.7). "The activities connected with voice can on occasion become a highly desired and in itself" (op. cit., p.8) and thus they decrease the cost of
voice and may even turn it into a benefit. But in the case of group exit it is the
cost of this exit rather than of voice which is psychologically decreased in this
way. This cost can sometimes be enormous for the individuals concerned. Its
acceptance by many would be incomprehensible without the existence of a com-

pensating mechanism of increasing loyalty to the ingroup as the dangers of group
exit loom larger and the deviant status of its members in the outside world becomes
sharper and clearer.

3. Voice, status quo and social comparison in intergroup relations

The major theme of Hirschman's book was the specification of conditions in
which voice can help in counteracting a decline in the efficiency of functioning of
an organization. There is no doubt that voice will sometimes also be heard as a
rationalization for keeping things as they are in the interest of some people, even
when general efficiency leaves much to be desired. But a discussion of this banality
was not the purpose of Hirschman's exercise, and the value of his analysis lies
precisely in its focus on the potentialities of voice as a recuperation mechanism.

In the previous section of this paper group exit and some forms of its inter-
action with group voice were discussed as a recuperation mechanism for groups
which perceive their position in a multi-group system as being less than satis-
factory. One of the conditions in which, as Hirschman wrote, "a no-exit situation
will be superior to a situation with some limited exit (is) if exit is ineffective as a
recuperation mechanism, but does succeed in draining from the firm or organization
its more quality conscious, alert, and potentially activist customers or members"
(op. cit., p. 55). It is likely, of course, that customers or members who display
the qualities just mentioned are often nearer to the top of the social heap than are
the more passive ones.

In the case of individual members of an organization the greater involvement
in it of those who are nearer to the top makes exit for them more costly or difficult
than for others, and at the same time their voice is likely to be louder, more
enthusiastic and more effective. As individuals, they may be simultaneously
concerned with preventing the decline of the organization and preventing the decline
of their relative position in it. The same will be true of the higher status groups
when the organization consists of groups which are clearly separate from one another.
We have here a situation which is parallel to that discussed in relation to the exit of disaffected groups in the previous section of this paper. The position of an individual belonging to a higher status group needs to be considered in relation to his group at the same time as the position of his group in relation to other groups in the organization. This can be done with regard to the possibilities of an individual's exit from his group, his group's exit from the organization, and the corresponding functions and directions of voice.

The membership of a high status group is often satisfying in a variety of ways. Exit from it is therefore, on the whole, unlikely. But the point is that whether some individuals do or do not leave the group (and they may leave for a number of reasons, including a conflict of values that the "superior" position of their group sometimes entails) the intergroup situation within the organization remains the same. The high status group as a whole cannot exit, unless it is intent upon collective self-destruction, actual or symbolic. As distinct from the disaffected group, its members have a great deal to lose and very often nothing to gain from any form of exit - be it emigration, separation or refusal to play by the rules. From their point of view, the decline in the efficiency of the organization can take one of two forms: a decline in the overall functioning of the system, or a decline in the relative position of their group within the system. The former without the latter would lead to the use of voice, individually or collectively, in the ways described by Hirschman. The decline in the relative position of the group, or the threat of such a decline, has certain psychological consequences relevant to the use of group voice which may be considered by returning briefly to some aspects of the psychology of social comparison.

In a recent letter to The Times (29 Oct. 1974) concerned with the present economic plight of Britain Elliott Jaques exclaimed in desperation: "Is it not apparent to all that the present wave of disputes has to do with relativities, relativities and nothing but relativities?" The "relativities" of the lower status groups were discussed from a certain point of view earlier in this paper. Those of the higher status groups are, of course, concerned with the preservation of differentials. As I wrote above, we are what we are because "they" are not what we are. But this item of folk wisdom needs to be inserted in a wider context which is that of the preservation of an individual's satisfactory social identity in a network of social comparisons.
Social identity can be defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, op. cit., p. 15). Or, as Berger (1966) wrote: "Society not only defines but creates psychological reality. The individual realizes himself in society - that is, he recognizes his identity in socially defined terms and these definitions become reality as he lives in society" (p. 107).

"Several consequences regarding group membership follow upon this "recognition of identity in socially defined terms". They can be described as follows:

(a) It can be assumed that an individual will tend to remain a member of a group and seek membership of new groups if these groups have some contribution to make to the positive aspects of his social identity; i.e. to those aspects of it from which he derives some satisfaction.

(b) If a group does not satisfy this requirement, the individual will tend to leave it unless

(i) leaving the group is impossible for some "objective" reasons, or,
(ii) it conflicts with important values which are themselves a part of his acceptable social identity.

(c) If leaving the group presents the difficulties just mentioned, then at least two solutions are possible:

(i) to change one's interpretation of the attributes of the group so that its unwelcome features (e.g. low status) are either justified or made acceptable through a reinterpretation;
(ii) to accept the situation for what it is and engage in social action which would lead to desirable changes in the situation.
(Of course, there may be various combinations of (i) and (ii) such as, for example, when the negative attributes are justified and social action to remove them is undertaken at the same time.)

(d) No group lives alone - all groups in society live in the midst of other groups. In other words, the "positive aspects of social identity" and the reinterpretation of attributes and engagement in social action only acquire meaning in relation to, or in comparisons with, other groups." (Tajfel, op. cit., pp. 15-16).

The inescapable nature of these comparisons is due to the fact that:

"The characteristics of one's group as a whole (such as its status, its richness or poverty, its skin colour or its ability to reach its aims) achieve most of their significance in relation to perceived differences from other groups and the value connotation of these differences. For
example, economic deprivation acquires its importance in social attitudes, intentions and actions mainly when it becomes relative deprivation; easy or difficult access to means of production and consumption of goods, to benefits and opportunities become psychologically salient mainly in relation to comparisons with other groups; the definition of a group (national, racial or any other) makes no sense unless there are other groups around. A group becomes a group in the sense of being perceived as having common characteristics or a common fate only because other groups are present in the environment.

Thus the psychological aspects and consequences of the membership of a group are capable of any kind of a definition only because of their insertion into a multi-group structure. Consequently, the social identity of an individual conceived as his "knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of his membership" can only be defined through the effects of social categorizations segmenting an individual's social environment into his own group and others." (op.cit., pp.17-18).

In situations which are characterised by the structure of belief in social change (as the term was defined in this paper) "a social group can fulfil its function of protecting the social identity of its members only if it manages to keep its positively valued distinctiveness from other groups" (op.cit., p.18). The emergence of this structure of belief must be understood, in the case of high status groups, as being dependent upon the two conditions just discussed: the high cost of an individual's exit from his group; and the very high cost (or impossibility) of the group's exit from the organization. These are also the conditions determining an intense use of the group's voice in the attempts to prevent its comparative decline.

We must now return to the use of voice not as a response to the comparative decline of the ingroup but as a response to the decline in the efficiency of functioning of the total organization. Assuming that differentials are perceived by members of a high status group as being eroded, three possibilities need to be considered:

(1) The comparative decline of the group is not perceived by its members as being associated in one way or another with the decline or the prevention of decline in the functioning of the organization as a whole.

(2) This comparative decline is perceived as being associated with the decline in the functioning of the total organization.
(3) This comparative decline is perceived as being associated with the prevention of decline in the functioning of the total organization.

These are the psychological alternatives. The actual changes in the functioning of the organization may or may not correspond to the group's perception of what happens. The point is, however, that it is these shared perceptions, tending to become more common and widespread as the group sees itself increasingly beleaguered, which will determine the intensity and the direction of the use of voice. In the first two of the three cases, there is no perceived conflict between responding to the threat of comparative decline and the wider interests at stake. It can therefore be assumed that the group's "ethnocentric" (or more generally, sociocentric) voice will be given free rein. Human nature being what it is (an odd expression to come from a psychologist), it can be assumed that there will be a solid wall of rationalizations (or defensive ideologies) to ward off the uncomfortable thoughts inseparable from the third case.

The emergence and diffusion of these defensive ideologies may at times determine, and at times may be determined by, the use of voice (cf. Festinger, 1957, for theoretical statements concerning the second alternative, followed by an extensive literature of experimental studies on cognitive dissonance). Independently, however, of the nature of the psychological processes generating these ideologies, we must consider the following relationships between the use of voice by the threatened group and the realities of the decline of the total organization:

(1) As determined by some external criteria (e.g. measures of economic performance) the group is wrong in assuming that its comparative decline is not associated either with a decline or with a prevention of decline in the functioning of the total organization.

(2) As determined in the same manner, the group is wrong in assuming that its comparative decline is associated with a decline in the total functioning.

(3) The group is right in assuming that its comparative decline is associated with a prevention of decline in the total organization. But in the ensuing conflict of perceived interests, the former decline turns out to be more important than the latter.

Whenever any of these three relationships comes to materialize, the use of voice by the threatened group may prove catastrophic for the organization as a whole;
and the higher is the status of the group threatened by the loss of its superior distinctiveness, the more catastrophic is its use of voice likely to become.

Two notes need to be appended to conclude and clarify this discussion of group voice. The first concerns its almost exclusive preoccupation with the "subjective" aspects of the relationships between groups, with the psychological processes of social comparison rather than with the "objective" conflicts of interest. This emphasis was not chosen because of a belief on my part that these social psychological processes are "more important" than, or primary to, the social, economic and political intergroup processes which form their context. These psychological correlates of the other relationships do, however, exist; and, as I wrote elsewhere (Tajfel, 1974b) the concern is "with certain points of insertion of social psychological variables into the causal spiral; and (the) argument is that, just as the effects of these variables are determined by the previous social, economic and political processes, so they also acquire in their turn an autonomous function which enables them to deflect in one direction or another the subsequent functioning of these processes" (p. 65).

Finally, I wish to return to the "individual" vs. "group" dichotomy discussed earlier in this paper. There is little doubt that many of the points discussed and conclusions presented here apply to interindividual behaviour and attitudes as well as to the intergroup scenario. The point of departure (and of arrival) was, however, firmly kept in the area of intergroup relations because of my conviction that it is only when this is explicitly done (at some risk of neglect of other issues) that we have, as social psychologists, a good chance of making a contribution to the understanding of social processes at large.
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