

# IDENTITY UNCERTAINTY: FERTILE GROUND FOR AUTOCRACY

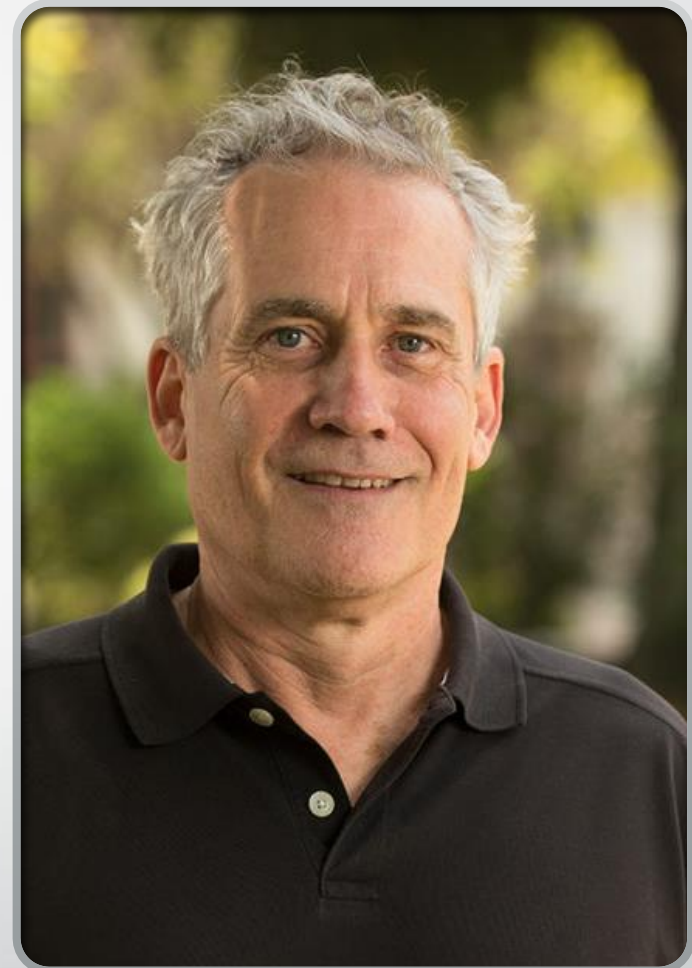
I explore the conjunction of two social psychological theories of social influence and group processes, the social identity theory of leadership (e.g., Hogg, Van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012) and uncertainty-identity theory (e.g., Hogg, 2007, 2012), to argue that feelings of uncertainty about one's current and future identity and associated life prospects motivate a preference for autocratic leadership. Under these circumstances people need and seek leadership; and they prefer a leader who they feel is "like them", targets and demonizes outgroups, has a directive and authoritarian leadership style, and delivers an uncomplicated agenda that speaks more to the heart than the mind. This leadership combination resolves identity uncertainty because it provides a distinctive, unambiguous and tightly consensual identity. To illustrate this analysis, I overview a number of recent and new empirical studies from a wider program of research on the impact of identity uncertainty on leadership preference, focusing on attributes of the leader, leadership behavior and the nature and delivery of the leader's identity-related message. The implications for both organizational and national/public leadership in contemporary society are explored.

**Social Psychology colloquium series**

**Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**3:30pm-4:30pm**

**Education 001**



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