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# Identity Economies and Social Allocation: Explaining Participation, Recognition, and Inequality Through Identity Group Theory

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## Abstract

Identity has become one of the central organising principles of contemporary social life. Yet existing approaches frequently analyse identity through separate frameworks of recognition, discourse, performance, or social capital. While valuable, these perspectives often lack a systematic account of how identity structures access to resources and participation within social systems.

This paper develops Identity Group Theory (IGT) as a framework for understanding identity as a mechanism of social allocation. It introduces the concept of identity economies: systems in which actors allocate finite resources—including time, energy, attention, renown, reciprocity, and monetary resources—across competing identities. These allocations are governed by identity narratives that establish legitimacy, obligation, and entitlement.

The paper argues that identity functions not merely as a source of meaning but as an organising principle through which participation, hierarchy, and inequality are produced and regulated. Particular attention is given to the mechanisms of interpellation, allocation, regulation, and resource conversion that sustain identity economies.

By integrating symbolic and material dimensions of social life within a single analytical framework, the paper offers a new perspective on contemporary debates concerning power, social organisation, and inequality. It concludes by outlining directions for empirical research capable of evaluating the explanatory value of the proposed model.

**Keywords:** Identity Group Theory (IGT); Social Identity; Identity Economies; Social Capital; Recognition Theory