

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Links the identity of an individual to
the groups to which she belongs

WHAT IT DOES FOR SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

- Explains where perspectives come from
- Explains why people function as representatives of their groups
- Gives meaning to the concept of “identity”

ORIGINS

- Originally a European theory
- Origins in ethnic conflicts. The “master race,” former Yugoslavia
- Originally about conflicts between large groups.
- Has recently been extended to the individual in a group.

VOCABULARY

- “Inter” means between.
- Thus intergroup means between groups.
- Interpersonal means between people
- “Intra” means within.
- Thus intragroup means within group phenomena
- Intrapersonal means within one person

THE THEORY IN OUTLINE

- A self inclusive social category
- Provides a category-congruent self definition
- That constitutes an element of the self concept
- That can become the active self

A SELF INCLUSIVE SOCIAL CATEGORY

- Nationality. I am an American.
- Political affiliation. A Republican
- Ethnicity and gender. A Black woman
- Identifications. A fan of X team.
- Self inclusive. All include “I”

PROVIDES A CATEGORY CONGRUENT SELF- DEFINITION

- I am an X. An American, a democrat
- Descriptive. I know how X's act
- Descriptive. I know how X's think about the world
- Prescriptive. I know how to act
- Prescriptive. I know how to think about the world

AN ELEMENT OF SELF CONCEPT

- The concept is available to me.
- Called up in generally automatic ways
- The concept is determined by my group's history of interaction with other groups.
- Example. The identity “Black American male” is defined by historical contrasts

THE TWO PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

- Categorization. An automatic perceptual process
- Self enhancement. The motive to have an evaluatively positive self concept

CATEGORIZATION

- Perceptual, works on social and non social stimuli.
- Defines and clarifies group boundaries
- Assigns people to “correct” category
- Assigns self to contextually relevant category

SELF ENHANCEMENT

- The motive to have an evaluatively positive self concept.
- (Hmnn. Think about verification.)
- Achieved by seeing your group positively
- As compared to contextually relevant out groups

THE TWO PROCESSES

- Give interpretations of the nature of relationships between own and other groups
- The stability and legitimacy of power relationships
- Possibilities of mobility and change

SELF CATEGORIZATION THEORY

- The operation of the categorization process as the cognitive basis of group behavior
- Context creates categories
- Categories generate the prototypic group member
- The norm is to behave as the prototypic group member.
- The individual is “depersonalized.”

PEOPLE IN GROUPS

- There is no such thing as a group in isolation.
- Intergroup comparisons determine intragroup norms and identities
- The group prototype determines the individual's identity.
- Summary. The group is in the person