

The Lecture Contains:

- ☰ Why to study inter-group relations?
- ☰ Freudian Theory
- ☰ Realistic conflict theory
- ☰ Social identity theory
- ☰ Equity theory
- ☰ Relative deprivation theory
- ☰ Elite theory
- ☰ Five-stage model

Why to study inter-group relations?

- Given that social psychology aims to study human experiences and behaviour in social situations within the socio-historical contexts, studies of ways to improve inter-group harmony and prevent inter-group conflicts have had social psychologists interested in. Whether it is multi-ethnic society, migration, international relations, war or ethnic conflicts, social psychological studies of inter-group relations becomes a socially relevant topic of study. The theories of inter-group relations help understand various explanations for the ways people of one group relate to the other group members. These also tend to explain the reasons for frequently observed conflicts between two groups of people. Following are the social psychological theories of inter-group relations:
 - Freudian Theory
 - Realistic conflict theory
 - Social identity theory
 - Equity theory
 - Relative deprivation theory
 - Elite theory
 - Five-stage model

Freudian Theory

- According to Sigmund Freud, the inter-group relations are often marked by the group members' positive feelings about their own group (in-group) and negative feelings about the other groups (out-group). He attributed this to the basic nature of human emotions that, according to him, are guided by the unconscious motives of love as well as hostility. Love of all the members is directed towards the group and the group leader but hostility is displaced towards other groups. For Freud, the inter-group conflicts are not because of any conflicts related to a clash in
- material or social interests of different group. He thought of the unconscious motives of the persons leading to such conflicts in the group settings. Many theorists differed from his understanding of the cause of inter-group conflicts.

Realistic conflict theory

- Muzafer Sherif, a social psychologist who did some classic experiments to understand inter-group relations, provided some important insights into the phenomenon. According to his research findings, inter-group conflicts occur due a competition over scarce resources. The scarce resources that become a ground for competing could be either material (e.g., money, physical space) or social (e.g., status or power). These conflicts resolved through a super-ordinate goal, that is a goal for which the groups at conflict have to work towards a common or mutually acceptable goal by combining their existing resources.

Social identity theory

- Henri Tajfel (1978), through his experiments, brought to the fore 'achieving and maintaining a positive social identity' as an important process influencing inter-group relations. A part of a person's self concept is related to the value and emotions that he/she attaches to being a member of a group or a set of groups. Through the experiments conducted by him and his associates, he could notice that the mere perception or awareness of being categorized into a group (in-group) and not the other (out-group) creates a favourable attitude towards members of the in-group and a negative attitude towards the out-group members.
- Recent research has shown that such an inter-group discrimination is more associated with situations where people perceive that the social order or the sociopolitical hierarchy in which their groups are placed is unstable or illegitimate.

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Equity theory

- Equity theory is based on the assumption that a person or a group desires that justice prevails in the relationship with other person or group. People feel distressed once they perceive injustice in the relationship. This justice or injustice is based on the comparison of the ratio of outcomes and inputs of one group with the other. Following are the diagram for the conditions of equity and inequity:

EQUITY

$$\frac{\text{Outcomes for Group 'A'}}{\text{Inputs by Group 'A'}} = \frac{\text{Outcomes for Group 'B'}}{\text{Inputs by Group 'B'}}$$

Equity theory (continued...)

INEQUITY

$$\frac{\text{Outcomes for Group 'A'}}{\text{Inputs by Group 'A'}} > (\text{or } <) \frac{\text{Outcomes for Group 'B'}}{\text{Inputs by Group 'B'}}$$

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Relative deprivation theory

- Relative deprivation theory posits that a group's satisfaction about its position in the society is not related to any objective situation. It is rather associated with comparison with other group's position. The group's dissatisfaction is rooted in its comparison with a 'better off' group especially when the group members feel that they are capable of achieving a better position and that they deserve to do so.

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Elite theory

- Elite theory tends to explain the relationship between the majority and the minority groups. It assumes that the society is governed by the elites and those who are ruled are the non-elites. In societies where the talented members of a non-elite group have equal opportunity to become the elites who can govern, the conflicts may not arise between the elites and the non-elites. However, if there is not such an openness of flow of talented members to power, then inter-group conflicts may arise.

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Five-stage model

- The five-stage model proposed by Taylor and McKirnan (1984) follows the following structure :
- Stage 1 : Rigidity in group stratification based on societal categories such as class, gender etc.
- Stage 2 : A perception begins to emerge that it is the performance and the ability of individuals that shape group membership.
- Stage 3: The talented members of the disadvantaged group attempt for upward mobility.
- Stage 4: If the upward mobility is not successful, then they engage in 'consciousness raising' and collective movement against the advantaged group.
- Stage 5: The inter-group harmony is maintained until neither of the groups dominate the other.
- In case of a relative inequality due to the dominance of a group, the groups may return to any of the earlier stages.

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